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CHRISTIAN UNION OVERTURE

*An Interpretation of*  
THE DECLARATION AND ADDRESS  
OF THOMAS CAMPBELL

BY  
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## PREFACE

THE *Declaration and Address* of Thomas Campbell has always possessed distinct historic interest. It has been republished a number of times but has never been revised or put in such a form as to make it easy reading for a twentieth century student. In view of the renewed emphasis upon Christian union which has become so characteristic of present day religious life, it has seemed worth while to present the Declaration to the public in a form which we trust will prove more appealing than has been true of the older editions. The text of the immortal document is given verbatim in the present volume, the only changes being a revision of the paragraphing and the addition of topical headings where they appeared to be necessary in order to bring out the full meaning of the author.

Such commentary as this book contains has been designed to make its original meaning clear and also to interpret that meaning in the light of the development of the last hundred years. If Thomas Campbell could come back to earth at the present time, he would no doubt wish to make some changes in the *Declaration and Address* in order to adapt it to present day needs. The astonishing thing about the book is not that so much of it has become obsolete but that there is so little which is not vital and significant for our own day. There are few books a century old which need less revision than the *Declaration and Address* in order to make them of distinct value and helpfulness to men and women of the present age.

FREDERICK D. KERSHNER.

Drake University  
April 25, 1923.



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PART I  
INTRODUCTION





## PART I—INTRODUCTION

### I. HOW THE DECLARATION CAME TO BE WRITTEN

**T**HERE are certain outstanding political documents which have affected the whole course of human history. Such, for example, are the "Code of Hammurabi," the "Laws of Moses," the English "Magna Charta," and the "Declaration of Independence" of the thirteen American colonies. In the field of religion, the same situation obtains. There are a few epoch-making productions which have been responsible for the specific trend which church thought and activity have taken through the ages. It is characteristic of these works that, while they become antiquated in certain particulars, they never really lose their power to influence and fashion the lives of those who read them. The "Confessions of St. Augustine," for example, while absurdly out of date so far as science and philosophy are concerned, possesses a living and heart-searching appeal which will retain its freshness and power to all succeeding generations. The same things are true of a mediaeval document like "The Imitation of Christ" or the probably apocryphal "Little Flowers of St. Francis." These books have an eternal quality about them which age cannot wither nor custom stale. The fact that there are certain extraneous inaccuracies present in all of them does not in the least affect their abiding value. There must be some alloy in almost all of the precious metals which the miner extracts from the earth. So it is, even with the greatest and most imperishable monuments, both of literature and of art.

The Declaration and Address of Thomas Campbell can fairly lay claim to being regarded as one of the

immortal documents of religious history. This is true, not only because of its influence upon the history of the Disciples of Christ but also because of its intrinsic merit. It touches upon the most important problems of the modern church, and until these problems are settled it will always possess a direct and searching appeal. The evils which the author deprecated are still with us and whatever view we may take of the solution which he suggests, no one can dispute the earnestness and acuteness of his appeal. In order to understand and appreciate what he has written, it is necessary that we should know something of the man himself and of the intellectual and spiritual background of the period in which he lived.

In the *Memoirs of Elder Thomas Campbell*, written by his son Alexander, we find the statement that Thomas Campbell was descended from the Campbells of Argyle, Scotland. The duke of Argyle, so Alexander tells us, Sir Archibald Campbell, was the head of the clan. At one time, it is said, he commanded a regiment of men every one of which was named Campbell.

Archibald Campbell, the father of Thomas, was the son of James Campbell who was born in the county of Down, near Dyerlake Wood, Ulster, Ireland. The Campbells were among the Scotch settlers who colonized Ulster and whose descendants have helped to make the Irish problem increasingly difficult because of their religious differences with their southern neighbors. James Campbell, according to the record, lived to be one hundred and five years of age. There is nothing of especial significance recorded concerning his life. He appears to have been a member of the Roman Catholic church, in which faith he brought up his son Archibald. The latter entered the British army while merely a boy and served under General Wolfe in his campaigns in the West Indies and in Canada. He was present at the battle of Quebec and there was a tradition preserved in the Campbell family to the effect that General Wolfe,

after his victory over Montcalm, died in the arms of Archibald Campbell. After the fall of Quebec, young Campbell came back to Ireland and spent the remainder of his life in his native land. At some time after his return, he gave up the Roman Catholic faith and became a strict member of the Church of England, in which communion he died at the age of eighty-eight. He had four sons, Thomas, James, Archibald and Enos. The last named died in 1804, three years before his father. The other three sons were all members of the Secession or Antiburgher Presbyterian Church, Archibald having been a ruling elder of this church for many years in his home town of Newry. Enos Campbell, before his death, held the position of head master of one of the most popular academies in the same town.

Thomas Campbell emigrated to the United States in 1807, coming under the special direction of the General Associate Synod of the Antiburgher Presbyterian Church. When he arrived in Philadelphia, he found the synod of his church in session and upon the presentation of his testimonials, he was cordially received and was recommended to the Presbytery of Chartiers in western Pennsylvania. He journeyed to his new field by the slow and toilsome method of transportation then in vogue and it was some weeks before he reached his destination. As soon as he came upon the ground, he presented his credentials to the presbytery, was received into its communion, and at once had a field of labor assigned to him. It should be said that he came to his work with a degree of religious breadth which was entirely in advance of his local surroundings. Before he left Scotland, he had been prominent in a movement which looked toward the union of the Burghers and the Antiburghers at the Scotch General Assembly in Glasgow. He made a notable argument in favor of union, but his views did not prevail with the Assembly. Alexander Campbell, in commenting upon his part in the discussion, tells the following incident:

Some four years after this discussion, when a student in the University of Glasgow, while returning home from church one day, I was interrogated by a gentleman accompanying me as to my parentage. On naming my father, he said: "I listened to your father in our General Assembly in this city, pleading for a union between the Burghers and the Antiburghers. But, sir, while, in my opinion, he clearly out-argued them, they out-voted him."

There may have been something in the ancestry of Thomas Campbell which predisposed him toward religious tolerance. His grandfather had lived and died a Roman Catholic. His father, throughout the years when Thomas could remember him, had been a rigid Episcopalian. He and his brothers were all Presbyterians of the straightest sect. Such an inheritance was calculated to beget tolerance and few men in the history of the church have maintained a more tolerant attitude than Thomas Campbell. The breadth of his religious sympathy extended far beyond the ranks of any particular communion and embraced "all who love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity." Tolerant and sympathetic as he was, there was no lack of loyalty or fervor about his religion. Speaking out of a personal knowledge of his work as a pastor in the County of Armagh, Ireland, his son and biographer says:

We only express a prevailing public opinion, when we say that he was the most earnest, indefatigable, and devoted minister in the presbytery and synod to which he belonged. In preaching, teaching, and in visiting his charge, inculcating personal and family religion, he had certainly no superior; and, so far as we could ascertain no equal. His family training and discipline were peculiarly didactic, biblical, and strict. The Bible, with Brown's Catechism, was, during the minority of his family, a daily study and a daily recitation. He also instituted these customs in all the families of his congregation. His congregation at Ahorey, in the county of Aramagh, was therefore regarded as the best educated community in the presbytery of Market Hill, to which he belonged. If not formally and professedly a reformer in this department in his own synod, he was virtually so. He also strongly remonstrated against the schisms in that large denomination called Presbyterians, under their respective armorials—Covenanters or Cameronians, Burghers and Antiburghers or Seceders.

By temperament, education and inheritance, Thomas Campbell was predisposed to religious tolerance. He

had manifested a disposition toward Christian unity, during his nine years' pastorate in Ireland, far beyond the prevailing viewpoint of the age. At the Synod in Belfast, three years before he moved to America and again a year later, at the joint meeting in Lurgan, he had led the movement for uniting the two bodies of the Seceders. In 1806, a year before he came to America, he pleaded the same cause before the General Synod in Glasgow. It is worth noting in this connection that while the cause which he advocated was defeated in all of these gatherings, only fourteen years later, in 1820, it was triumphant. By this time, however, Thomas Campbell had advanced in his vision of union far beyond the circle of his own denomination, and was advocating with all the enthusiasm at his command the larger unity of the entire church of God.

It is interesting to note that the immediate circumstance which sent Thomas Campbell to the new world was the desire to recuperate physically after his strenuous labors in his home field. His health was very delicate at this time and his physicians urged him to take a sea voyage as the most promising, if not, as his son puts it, "the only restorative of his enervated system." When he came to the United States, it was with the expectation of returning to Ireland as soon as his health would permit. He left his wife and family in the homeland to carry on his work. As the event proved, they came to him but he did not go back to them. One cannot avoid speculating upon the consequences of such a return had the original schedule been carried out. Doubtless the Campbells would have been influential in their homeland, but one cannot help feeling that it required the breadth and vigor of the new national life which was then awakening in America in order to fully develop their later plea. The Disciples of Christ are distinctly American in their group outlook and attitude and they remain today the most numerous and influential religious body which had its inception in America.

When Thomas Campbell began his work in western Pennsylvania, he was under the direction of the presbytery of Chartiers. From the first, he met with opposition. Doubtless most of this arose from his divergent views, especially in the matter of Christian tolerance, but there is a tradition to the effect that envious feelings, on the part of his brother ministers, were partially responsible for the opposition to his work. A personal letter of Elder James Foster, who crossed the Atlantic almost simultaneously with Thomas Campbell, contains the following interesting paragraph concerning the early work of Mr. Campbell:

He commenced his labors in this country under the direction of the Chartiers presbytery. They viewed him with a jealous eye, being superior to them both as a scholar and a preacher. In the course of some time, they brought a charge against him before the presbytery for not preaching the gospel. He defended himself against this charge but they would not acquit him. He appealed to the Synod and they acquitted him from the charge.

The immediate cause of his citation before the presbytery was his attitude toward the communion service while conducting his missionary work. He invited all members of the Presbyterian family to partake of the Lord's Supper and thus aroused the opposition of his co-worker, a young minister named Mr. Wilson. Wilson did not oppose the action of his companion when it took place, but having talked the matter over with Mr. Campbell afterward, he felt that his duty compelled him to bring the matter before the presbytery. He did this in the usual form of "libel," bringing sundry, formal and specified charges, the most important of which alleged that Mr. Campbell had not inculcated strict adherence to the church standards and had even expressed his disapproval of certain things which those standards contained. The upshot of the matter was that the presbytery held a church trial, resulting in the condemnation of the accused who was formally censured by the organization. As was his privilege under the laws of the church, Mr. Campbell appealed from the

decision of the presbytery to the Associate Synod of North America. The pronouncement of the Synod in the matter is somewhat interesting because of the momentous results which flowed from it. Alexander Campbell quotes the exact language of the decision to the following effect:

Upon an examination of the reasons of Protest, and the presbytery's answer, it was the judgment of the Synod that there were such informalities in the proceedings of the Presbytery in the trial of said case as to afford sufficient reason to the Synod to set aside their judgment and decision, and to release the protestor from the censure inflicted by the Presbytery; which they accordingly did.

Thomas Campbell was therefore technically acquitted upon his appeal to the higher court of his church. Had the matter remained there, the later history might have been written differently. Unfortunately, however, the subject was further referred to a committee who brought in the following report:

Upon the whole, the committee is of the opinion that Mr. Campbell's answers to the two first articles of charge are so evasive and unsatisfactory, and highly equivocal upon great and important articles of revealed religion, as to give ground to conclude, that he has expressed sentiments very different upon these articles, and from sentiments held and professed by this church, and are sufficient ground to infer censure.

A more insinuating and, in the best sense of the word, insulting decision than is contained in the report of this committee is hardly to be found in the pages of religious history. Had the members of the committee condemned the defendant because of heresy alone, the situation would have been different. Their language, however, involves not only an accusation of heresy but also one of hypocrisy and equivocation "upon great and important articles of revealed religion." From what they are pleased to style his "evasive" attitude, they conclude that at some time he *must* have expressed sentiments "very different upon these articles" and, having expressed such sentiments, he deserved censure. In commenting upon the situation at this point, Alexander Campbell

says: "At that time, and long after, Father Campbell was as sound a Calvinist as any man I then knew in Scotland or Ireland; as strong in that system as the most orthodox in the Presbyterian church." It was bad enough, under the circumstances, to be unjustly accused of heretical views but it was infinitely worse to be accused of hypocrisy. One can readily see that a high-spirited gentleman, like Thomas Campbell, could hardly accept such a decision and remain true to his own conceptions of personal independence and integrity. There is some question as to whether he did accept it. The general opinion has been that he acquiesced in the decision in the interest of Christian charity and forbearance. Robert Richardson in his "Memoirs of Alexander Campbell" says:

Mr. Campbell fondly hoped that the amicable relations formerly existing between him and the Presbytery of Chartiers would be restored, and that he would be permitted to prosecute his labors in peace. In this, however, he soon found himself mistaken, and discovered with much regret that the hostility of his opponents had been only intensified by the issue of the trial and was more undisguised than ever. Misrepresentation and calumny were employed to detract from his influence; a constant watch was placed over his proceedings, and he discovered that even spies were employed to attend his meetings and take notes of his discourses, in order, if possible, to obtain fresh grounds of accusation against him. . . . He came, therefore, to the conclusion finally that it was his duty to separate himself from all connection with a people who seemed utterly unwilling to tolerate any overture for healing the religious dissensions of the time, and who seemed to regard their own particular "Testimony" as practically a more important rule of action than the Bible. He accordingly presented to the Synod a formal renunciation of its authority announcing that he abandoned all ministerial connection with it and would hold himself thenceforth utterly unaffected by its decisions.

It would appear from the above statement that Thomas Campbell accepted the decision of the Synod in good faith notwithstanding its insinuations of hypocrisy and continued his work with the Presbytery of Chartiers until the further actions of his opponents in the church made it impossible for him to remain in the Presbyterian communion.



Alexander Campbell in his memoirs of his father gives in detail the communication which Thomas sent to the Synod at the time when he withdrew from the church. The document is too long to quote here but it is interesting to note that there is nothing said in it concerning the later derelictions which Dr. Richardson gives as the final basis of withdrawal. The argument is based solely upon the lack of fairness, on the part of the Synod, in taking its official action. The following direct citations from the communication in question are of immediate interest:

It is with sincere reluctance, and, at the same time, with all due respect and esteem for the brethren of this reverend Synod who have presided in the trial of my case, that I find myself in duty bound to refuse submission to their decision as *unjust* and *partial*, and also *finally to decline the authority*, while they continue thus to overlook the grievous and *flagrant mal-administration of the Presbytery of Chartiers*. And I hereby do decline all ministerial connection with, or subjection to, the Associate Synod of North America, on account of the aforesaid corruptions and grievances; and do henceforth hold myself altogether unaffected by their decisions. And, that I may be properly understood, I will distinctly state that, while especial reference is had to the corruptions of *the Presbytery of Chartiers*, which constitute only a part of this Synod, *the corruptions of that Presbytery now become also the corruptions of the whole Synod; because when laid open to this Synod, and protested against, the Synod pass them over without due inquiry, and without animadversion.*

THOMAS CAMPBELL.

It is characteristic of the integrity of Thomas Campbell that he immediately refunded to the treasurer of the Synod the sum of money which had been advanced to him for his work as a missionary. He does not appear to have had any definite means of support at this time and his action in cutting off all connection with his base of supplies, while upon a mission field, indicates his courage and devotion to principle. He had the Scotch loyalty to duty, regardless of consequences in his make-up and he had no hesitation about choosing his pathway when duty blazed the trail before him.

ALEXANDER CAMPBELL tells us in his *Memoirs of Thomas Campbell*, (page 23) that the *Declaration and Address* was in press when he arrived in America in the autumn of 1809. He says that he read its proof sheets with special attention as they came from the printer and that he remarked to his father, at the close, that he would have to abandon infant baptism if he adhered to the premises contained in the document. He says,

I read to him the third proposition, page 48, expressed in the following words: "That in order (to church union and communion) nothing ought to be inculcated upon Christians as articles of faith nor required of them as terms of communion but what is expressly taught and enjoined upon them in the Word of God. Nor ought anything to be admitted as of divine obligation in their church constitution and managements but what is expressly enjoined by the authority of our Lord Jesus Christ and his apostles upon the New Testament church; either in express terms, or by approved precedent."

On reading this, I asked him in what passage or portion of the inspired oracles could we find a precept or an express precedent for the baptism or sprinkling of infants in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit? His response in substance was "It was merely inferential."

From the above statement, it is perfectly clear that when Thomas Campbell broke away from the Presbytery of Chartiers he had no thought of founding a new church or of withdrawing from the church of which he considered himself a member. His action, in voluntarily disassociating himself from the synod and presbytery with which he had been previously connected, did not amount to withdrawal from the larger fellowship of the Church of God. He must have felt that he was a Christian first and a Presbyterian second; and that any change in the status of his Presbyterianism did not necessarily carry with it his exclusion from the wider fellowship of the church in general. Upon the basis of past inheritance, as well as a thorough-going study of the Scriptures, he felt thoroughly convinced of the necessity for the unity of Christ's followers.

The denominational theory of the church, with its idea of variant branches all separate and yet all equal in value, made no appeal to him. The church about which he read in the New Testament was not split up into denominations and he saw no warrant for the sectarian divisions of his own day. He felt himself to be a brother to all who sincerely believed in and worshiped the Lord Jesus Christ in all the churches and he desired to have fellowship with them. It was this desire which prompted the writing and publication of the *Declaration and Address*. It seemed to Thomas Campbell that all who really wished to be followers of Christ would likewise long for fellowship with each other. Moreover, if all human obstacles could be brushed aside such a fellowship appeared inherently possible. In order to help in brushing these obstacles away the *Declaration and Address* was sent forth upon its mission. Although intended, primarily, for the ministers in the various churches, it was specifically addressed "To all that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity throughout all the churches."

The *Declaration and Address* grew out of a meeting held at Buffalo, August 17, 1809, which was attended by a number of persons of different religious denominations who were more or less perplexed in their views of religion. Doubtless, most of them were friends and followers of Thomas Campbell who had heard him express his convictions and who were disposed to share them with him. This countryside group meeting, which was destined to become historic, did not adjourn until it had organized the Christian Association of Washington, Pennsylvania, and had appointed a committee of twenty-one of its number "to confer with Elder Thomas Campbell to determine upon the proper means to carry into effect the important end of their association." This committee met in due time and as a result of its activities the *Declaration and Address* was written and published. There seems to be no question about the fact that Thomas Campbell was entirely responsible for the authorship of the document.

In a footnote to the version of the Declaration published in the *Memoirs of Thomas Campbell*, Alexander Campbell explains the purpose of the pamphlet after this fashion:

This "Declaration and Address" was not the constitution of any church existing then or now, but a "Declaration" of a purpose to institute a society of "Voluntary Advocates for Church Reformation." Its sole purpose was to promote "simple Evangelical Christianity," and for this end resolved to countenance and support such ministers, and such only, as exhibited manifest conformity to the original standard, in conversation, doctrine, zeal, and diligence; such as practiced that simple, original form of Christianity expressly exhibited upon the sacred page; without inculcating anything of human authority, of private opinion, or of inventions of men, as having any place in the constitution, faith, or worship of the Christian Church; or anything as a matter of Christian faith or duty for which there cannot be expressly produced a "*thus saith the Lord, either in expressed terms, or by approved precedence.*"

It may be safely inferred that Alexander Campbell, who wrote the above footnote many years after the original publication of the work to which it was attached, knew what his father had in mind when he prepared the work. Nevertheless, there exists a possibility that even he may have read into the original document something more than was intended by its author when it was written. Both of the Campbells had been led by later developments to go farther than Thomas intended when he separated from the Presbytery of Chartiers. The fundamental principles which guided the later development are all present in the *Declaration and Address*, but the ultimate consequences of these principles are certainly implicit rather than explicit in the document.

When Thomas Campbell prepared the book, he was not yet ready to abandon infant baptism, or affusion, although it appears that his son was ready to do so, or, at least, was inclined in this direction. Undoubtedly, the position which both Thomas and Alexander came to take later upon these and other questions was directly derived from the principles laid down in the Magna Charta of their movement. It is only fair to say, how-

ever, that these later conclusions had no place in the thought of Thomas Campbell when he began his independent work. At that time, he was still a Presbyterian in all important particulars and he would have dreaded originating any innovations which might have had a tendency to separate him from his Presbyterian brethren. He appears to have felt that there were no doctrinal questions of any importance which could possibly stand in the way of Christian union if the unscriptural and un-Christian accretions of the ages could be removed. It must have saddened his heart greatly in later years when he realized that the problem of disunion was much more formidable than it had previously appeared to him.

## II. FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLES

AS it is our purpose to allow the *Declaration and Address* to speak for itself wherever possible, we shall reserve any extended analysis of its principles until we have the text itself to deal with. It is important, however, that we should have a reasonably clear idea of the essential principles which underlie the document before we begin its perusal. The work itself lays down thirteen propositions and consists, for the most part, in an introduction to these propositions and a commentary upon them. Unfortunately, most modern readers are so far removed from the setting of the book that the commentary which it strove to supply itself is of little use. It is for this reason that the *Declaration and Address* receives such slight attention from the average reader of today. It has become a religious classic and, like most other classics, it has been embalmed in the veneration produced by its own sanctity. As a result, it possesses little value for the public at large. At a time when its principles are more needed than ever before in the history of the church, it is unavailable for general use. The chief object which the present study has in mind

is to bring it back once more to the field of living religious literature. If this can be done, we feel assured that its influence will prove both inspiring and wholesome.

The principles enunciated in the thirteen propositions of the Declaration may be summed up in the following statements:

First, the essential unity of the Church of Christ.

Second, the supreme authority of the Scriptures.

Third, the special authority of the New Testament.

Fourth, the fallacy of human creeds.

Fifth, the essential brotherhood of all who love Christ and try to follow him.

Sixth, that if human innovations can be removed from the church, the followers of Christ will unite upon the scriptural platform.

Beyond any question, Thomas Campbell believed all of these propositions to be true and also believed that if properly presented they would win the acceptance of Christendom. Whether they have been properly presented or not, may be a question for debate, but it is certainly true that they have not yet won the acceptance of Christendom as a whole. It would not seem out of place at this juncture to briefly analyze the present-day status of Thomas Campbell's propositions.

With regard to the first and most essential of his principles, the one which underlies all the others and which motivated the preparation of the *Declaration and Address*, the basic ideal of Christian unity, there can be no question but that present-day religious forces are more and more drifting in the direction of Thomas Campbell. The theory of denominationalism is no longer held by the thought leaders of the Christian world. The eloquent appeals in behalf of union and the vigorous criticisms of sectarianism contained in the *Declaration and Address* are now being re-echoed throughout the pulpits of evangelical Christendom. It is safe to say that a large portion of the language found in the pages prepared by Thomas Campbell could be quoted *verbatim* and with approval by

the majority of present day Protestant ministers. Thus far, at least, Thomas Campbell has "arrived."

The second and third principles are also widely accepted by the Christian forces of today. Very few religious bodies stress the Old Testament as in any way authoritative so far as the Church of Christ is concerned. Tacitly, or otherwise, most Christians agree that the essential principles of the gospel are to be found in the New Testament, and that if we live by the New Testament ideal this will be quite sufficient to prove our Christianity. Most of the accretions of which Thomas Campbell complained have already been swept away. People are quite willing to ask for no more than the New Testament contains. The difficulty now seems to be that there is a disposition not to ask for that much. Since Thomas Campbell's day, the progress of biblical criticism has led to somewhat radical developments in the thinking of many Christians. Of course, the large majority believe in the substantial authority of the New Testament text, but it is extremely questionable whether the Christian ministry at large views the sacred documents with anything like the reverence which is implicit throughout the *Declaration and Address*.

Thomas Campbell was looked upon as a radical in his own day but he would be regarded as exceedingly conservative if he were alive now. Whether he accepted the prevailing theory of verbal inspiration or not, there can be no question but that he fully believed in the substantial infallibility of the text. It is just at this point that the principles which he advocated appear to be most directly imperiled. His only platform for Christian union was the New Testament and he believed this platform to be infallible. If the infallibility of the New Testament, at least in all essential particulars, can be destroyed, it is difficult to see how his plea can avoid being destroyed with it. It may not be necessary for the modern mind to interpret the Scriptures in precisely the same way as they were interpreted in the *Declaration*, but

if the document is to be worth anything as a proposal for Christian unity, it certainly is necessary that the New Testament should be regarded as authoritative.

Modern progress has declared quite as decisively in favor of Thomas Campbell's position upon human creeds as it has with regard to his attitude upon Christian union. It is true that most churches retain their time-worn confessions of faith but very few of them require an acceptance of these standards or even an understanding of them for admission to the church. A confession of personal faith in Christ is accepted as an adequate theological equipment for church membership in almost all evangelical bodies. It is only fair to say that most Protestant denominations adhere to their creedal pronouncements for the benefit of the clergy only, and even the clergy are apt to take many of the propositions contained in the creed with a good deal of allowance. The disposition now with the most strenuous creedal advocates is to go back to the ecumenical symbols and especially the Nicene formula as their last bulwark. These were the first human creeds produced in the church and apparently they will be the last to be discarded. Nevertheless, the logic which sweeps away the Westminster confession and the Thirty-nine Articles will in the long run accomplish the same result for the creed of Nicea. The author of the *Declaration and Address* is still ahead of his age upon the question of creedal reform, but the age is rapidly catching up with him. At this point again, Thomas Campbell surely scores and scores heavily.

The fifth principle on the list is doubtless modern enough to meet with the approval of all. Certainly the trend of present day thought is in favor of eliminating the non-essential and accidental characteristics of all communions in an effort to bring together those who are genuine followers of Christ. Few people will dispute the fact that there are true Christians in all the churches. Few people, also, will question the fact that the test of Christianity in these cases is internal rather than ex-



ternal. It seems tragic that these disciples of the Master should be kept apart by unimportant and in many cases trivial considerations; and yet when any effort is made to bring them together, the most insuperable obstacles block the way. Thomas Campbell undoubtedly believed that a return to the New Testament order in the matter of church forms and organization would bring together all who were trying to follow the New Testament ideal of life. Experience, however, seems to prove that this solution will not accomplish the end desired. There are good Christians today, from the standpoint of the Christian life, who do not want to return to the New Testament conception of the church. There are still others who claim that we cannot tell what the New Testament conception of the church is. These people cannot be brought together on the New Testament platform. It is uncertain as to just how many there are of them but whatever number there may be, there is no provision for them in the unity platform of the *Declaration and Address*.

The sixth proposition has been discussed already in connection with the one which immediately precedes it on the list. It seemed unthinkable to Thomas Campbell that any real Christian should deny the absolute authority of the New Testament. This being the case, he could not understand why all Christians could not come together on the New Testament platform. The very fact that they were so widely separated simply proved that they had diverged from the common basis of the faith. If they could be brought back to this common basis, it appeared only logical that their differences should disappear. What is not taken into account in this argument is the immense influence of two thousand years of church history and development. Even when the causes which were originally responsible for schism are removed, the habits of mind and thought which the schism has engendered still remain. In order to overcome the inertia of past prejudices and beliefs, it will doubtless, require many

years, possibly even centuries, of definite effort. Christian unity is not as easy a proposition as it appeared to Thomas Campbell.

### III. GENERAL ANALYSIS

**I**N the original draft of the document, the *Declaration and Address* is divided into three sections. The first constitutes what was styled the "Declaration," the second the "Address," and the third the "Appendix." The Appendix contains about three-fifths of the brochure, as originally published, the Address about one-third, and the Declaration about one-sixteenth. Aside from these three main divisions, the book is singularly devoid of headings, topical arrangement, or any other devices for its interpretation. The paragraph structure is, moreover, far from ideal. Indeed, the whole work is presented in a form calculated to involve it in that obscurity which has largely surrounded it from the date of its publication.

It may appear like laying hands on the ark for any one of the spiritual descendants of the author to presume to make additions, explanatory or otherwise, in order to supply the original deficiency. Nevertheless from the viewpoint of the writer, it is better to take some liberties with an ancient document in order that the truths which it contains may be made more intelligible than it is to allow those truths to remain useless by reason of a misplaced reverence. Thomas Campbell wrote the *Declaration and Address* in order to mold the thinking and life of the religious communities about him. He did not care how the document was treated so long as the principles which it contained were disseminated. We pay the greatest reverence to his name when we help to extend the influence of his ideas. We shall not, therefore, apologize for the decidedly free handling which his masterpiece will receive at our hands. With the text itself we shall not take any special liberties, but we shall feel free to

arrange the material in such a way as to exhibit its meaning more clearly and we shall add such comment as in our judgment will assist the reader in laying hold of the great truths which the book proclaims.

In the original edition of the work, the following prefatory note under date of Sept. 7, 1809, preceded the opening sentences of the Declaration:

At a meeting held at Buffalo, August 17, 1809, consisting of persons of different religious denominations, most of them in an unsettled state as to a fixed Gospel ministry, it was unanimously agreed, upon the considerations, and for the purposes hereinafter declared, to form themselves into a religious association, designated as above, which they accordingly did, and appointed twenty-one of their number to meet and confer together, and, with the assistance of Elder Thomas Campbell, minister of the Gospel, to determine upon the proper means to carry into effect the important ends of their Association; the result of which conference was the following *Declaration and Address*, agreed upon and ordered to be printed, at the expense, and for the benefit of the society.

Immediately following this note, the reader plunges into the main body of the document. In its original form the only heading or introductory guidance afforded by the author is contained in the caption: "Declaration, etc."

Alexander Campbell, in the edition of the work which he re-published later, appears to have felt the desirability of some explanatory material at this point for he appended the introductory footnote on the first page: which we have already quoted in detail. Upon two or three other occasions, he included similar comments, without, however, adding in any great degree to the popularization of the document.

We shall now proceed with the original text with the addition of such explanatory apparatus as in our judgment is demanded in order to make it thoroughly intelligible at the present time.

## IV. DECLARATION AND ADDRESS

## The Declaration and Address

## Introductory Statement

*Assertion of the Right of Private Judgment.*—From the series of events which have taken place in the Churches for many years past, especially in his Western country, as well as from what we know in general of the present state of things in the Christian world, we are persuaded that it is high time for us not only to think, but also to act, for ourselves; to see with our own eyes, and to take all our measures directly and immediately from the Divine standard; to this alone we feel ourselves Divinely bound to be conformed, as by this alone we must be judged. We are also persuaded that as no man can be *judged* for his brother, so no man can *judge* for his brother; every man must be allowed to judge for himself, as every man must bear his own judgment—must give account of himself to God.

*Authority of the Scriptures.*—We are also of opinion that as the Divine word is equally binding upon all, so all lie under an equal obligation to be bound by it, and it alone; and not by any human interpretation of it; and that, therefore, no man has a right to judge his brother, except in so far as he manifestly violates the express letter of the law. That every such judgment is an express violation of the law of Christ, a daring usurpation of his throne, and a gross intrusion upon the rights and liberties of his subjects. We are, therefore, of opinion that we should beware of such things; that we should keep at the utmost distance from everything of this nature; and that, knowing the judgment of God against them that commit such things, we should neither do the same ourselves, nor take pleasure in them that do them.

*The Curse of Religious Schism.*—Moreover, being well aware, from sad experience, of the heinous nature and pernicious tendency of religious controversy among Christians; tired and sick of the bitter jarrings and janglings of a party spirit, we would desire to be at rest; and, were it possible, we would also desire to adopt and recommend such measures as would give rest to our brethren throughout all the Churches, as would restore unity, peace, and purity to the whole Church of God.

*The Only Way to Union.*—This desirable rest, however, we utterly despair either to find for ourselves, or to be able to recommend to our brethren, by continuing amid the diversity and rancor of party contentions, the veering uncertainty and clashings of human opinions: nor, indeed, can we reasonably expect to find it anywhere but in Christ and his simple word, which is the same yesterday, today, and forever. Our desire, therefore, for our-

selves and our brethren would be, that, rejecting human opinions and the inventions of men as of any authority, or as having any place in the Church of God, we might forever cease from further contentions about such things; returning to and holding fast by the original standard; taking the Divine word alone for our rule; and Holy Spirit for our teacher and guide, to lead us into all truth; and Christ alone, as exhibited in the word, for our salvation; that, by so doing, we may be at peace among ourselves, follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord. Impressed with these sentiments, we have resolved as follows:

## V. RESOLUTIONS

*The Christian Association.*—That we form ourselves into a religious association under the denomination of the Christian Association of Washington, for the sole purpose of promoting simple evangelical Christianity, free from all mixture of human opinions and inventions of men.

*The Association's Finances.*—That each member, according to ability, cheerfully and liberally subscribe a certain specified sum, to be paid half yearly, for the purpose of raising a fund to support a pure Gospel ministry, that shall reduce to practice that whole form of doctrine, worship, discipline, and government, expressly revealed and enjoined in the word of God. And, also, for supplying the poor with the holy Scriptures.

*Missionary Work of the Association.*—That this Society consider it a duty, and shall use all proper means in its power, to encourage the formation of similar associations; and shall for this purpose hold itself in readiness, upon application, to correspond with, and render all possible assistance to, such as may desire to associate for the same desirable and important purposes.

*The Association not a Church.*—That this Society by no means considers itself a Church, nor does at all assume to itself the powers peculiar to such a society; nor do the members, as such, consider themselves as standing connected in that relation; nor as at all associated for the peculiar purposes of Church associations; but merely as voluntary advocates for Church reformation; and, as possessing the powers common to all individuals, who may please to associate in a peaceable and orderly manner, for any lawful purpose, namely, the disposal of their time, counsel, and property, as they may see cause.

*Immediate Scope of the Work of the Association.*—That this Society, formed for the sole purpose of promoting simple evangelical Christianity, shall, to the utmost of its power, countenance and support such ministers, and such only, as exhibit a manifest

conformity to the original standard in conversation and doctrine, in zeal and diligence; only such as reduce to practice that simple original form of Christianity, expressly exhibited upon the sacred page; without attempting to inculcate anything of human authority, of private opinion, or inventions of men, as having any place in the constitution, faith, or worship, of the Christian Church, or anything as matter of Christian faith or duty, for which there cannot be expressly produced a "Thus saith the Lord, either in express terms, or by approved precedent."

*Executive Committee of the Association.*—That a Standing Committee of twenty-one members of unexceptional moral character, inclusive of the secretary and treasurer, be chosen annually to superintend the interests, and transact the business of the Society. And that said Committee be invested with full powers to act and do, in the name and behalf of their constituents, whatever the Society had previously determined, for the purpose of carrying into effect the entire object of its institution, and that in case of any emergency, unprovided for in the existing determinations of the Society, said Committee be empowered to call a special meeting for that purpose.

*Time of Meeting.*—That this Society meet at least twice a year, viz.: on the first Thursday of May, and of November, and that the collectors appointed to receive the half-yearly quotas of the promised subscriptions, be in readiness, at or before each meeting, to make their returns to the treasurer, that he may be able to report upon the state of the funds. The next meeting to be held at Washington on the first Thursday of November next.

*Program of the Meetings.*—That each meeting of the Society be opened with a sermon, the constitution and address read, and a collection lifted for the benefit of the Society; and that all communications of a public nature be laid before the Society at its half-yearly meetings.

*Appeal for Financial Support.*—That this Society, relying upon the all-sufficiency of the Church's Head, and, through his grace, looking with an eye of confidence to the generous liberality of the sincere friends of genuine Christianity; holds itself engaged to afford a competent support to such ministers as the Lord may graciously dispose to assist, at the request, and by invitation of the Society, in promoting a pure evangelical reformation, by the simple preaching of the everlasting Gospel, and the administration of its ordinances in an exact conformity to the Divine standard as aforesaid; and that, therefore, whatever the friends of the institution shall please to contribute toward the support of ministers in connection with this Society, who may be sent forth to preach at considerable distances, the same shall be gratefully received and acknowledged as a donation to its funds.

## VI. COMMENT UPON THE DECLARATION

THE *Declaration* furnishes an interesting illustration of the impossibility of realizing an ideal without resorting to practical means of achievement. Thomas Campbell did not want to found a church for he felt that there were too many churches already. If any one had told him that within a hundred years his followers would number over a million and would stand fifth on the roll of Protestant bodies in America, he would have shrunk back in horror. He did not want to found a new denomination even though he had been assured that this denomination would become the most powerful and numerous of all Christian bodies. Such a consummation, to his mind, would simply have seemed like adding fuel to the sectarian fires.

It was for the above reason that the Christian Association of Washington, Pennsylvania, was organized. Its constitution, as given above, expressly disclaims any thought of church organization. It was to work among the churches but was not itself to assume the name or functions of a church. The author of the *Declaration* was very explicit upon this point and held to it tenaciously until the logic of events forced him to revise his views. Just precisely what he thought he could accomplish through such an organization as the Association is difficult to say. Perhaps he never stopped to analyze the situation closely enough to think it through to its real practical details.

The *Declaration* calls upon ministers in all the churches to discard their man-made creeds and customs and to come together upon the simple New Testament platform. Did Mr. Campbell think that if they were to do this they could remain in the denominations to which they belonged? If so, as Robert Richardson in his biography of Alexander Campbell, said afterward, he displayed an extraordinary degree of credulity. If, on the other hand, these ministers came out of their denominations,

where were they to go? Doubtless Thomas Campbell would have answered this inquiry by saying that they should go into the Church of Christ without any denominational qualification. No church answering precisely to this description, however, existed at this time. The Christian Association did not even furnish such a church. It will be seen, therefore, that the *Declaration* was calculated to call men and women out of the denominational churches, while at the same time expressly stipulating that it furnished no church for them to enter. A condition so anomalous could not and did not exist for long.

The life of the Christian Association was indeed remarkably brief and uneventful. Alexander Campbell says that upon the basis embodied in the *Declaration* his father succeeded in constituting two Christian congregations in the year 1810. Both of these congregations were located in Washington County, Pennsylvania. For some five years, Thomas Campbell labored as minister in charge of the two churches, being assisted in his pastoral work by Elder James Foster. Archibald Campbell, the brother of Alexander, in writing of this period in his father's history says that the greater portion of the members of the two congregations mentioned, "had been in communion with different branches of the Presbyterian denomination, from which they thought proper to secede and plant themselves upon more scriptural basis of prophets and apostles, Jesus the Christ being the chief cornerstone." The status of such a work must have been exceedingly indefinite. It was to clarify the situation that, at the close of the year 1810, Thomas Campbell made application to the Synod of Pittsburg for admission "into Christian and ministerial communion." The answer to his petition is contained in the following quotation from the minutes of the Synod for the afternoon session of October fourth, 1810:

After hearing Mr. Campbell at length, and his answers to various questions proposed to him, the Synod unanimously resolved, that however specious the plan of the Christian Association and



however seducing its professions, as experience of the effects of similar projects in other parts has evinced their baleful tendency and destructive operations on the whole interests of religion by promoting divisions instead of union, by degrading the ministerial character, by providing free admission to any errors in doctrine, and to any corruptions in discipline, whilst a nominal approbation of the Scriptures as the only standard of truth may be professed, the Synod are constrained to disapprove the plan and its native effects.

And further, for the above and many other important reasons, it was resolved, that Mr. Campbell's request to be received into ministerial and Christian communion cannot be granted.

The comment of Dr. Richardson upon this decision is decidedly to the point. "For a party to have admitted into his bosom those who were avowedly bent on the destruction of partyism would, of course, have been perfectly suicidal." Thomas Campbell's fear of founding another denomination kept him from seeing that no existing denomination could possibly shelter him or his followers. Doubtless the alternatives before him were hard enough as they still are today, but there was only one choice possible. The fear of becoming a denomination which obsessed Father Campbell and his early associates still clings, in a measure, to their followers. They even, at times, do violence to the laws of language in order to escape from the sectarian demon which pursues them. The simple method of lower casing a capital D has been used to achieve the end desired with apparently no consideration of the fact that such linguistic antics hardly serve to disguise, to say nothing of changing, the actual situation.

It seems paradoxical to talk of an undenominational denomination and yet that is precisely the solution which was forced upon the Campbells and which is still forced upon their successors. Lack of clearness, at this point, in the thinking of certain leaders among the Disciples has more than once been responsible for cutting the sinews of their work. For fear of being regarded as a denomination, these well intending brethren have diffused their energies into a species of amiable inter-denominational fog. As a result, the unde-

nominal plea which depends for its success upon vigorous denominational activity has lost ground in their hands. If the experience of Thomas Campbell, at the very beginning of our history, proves anything, it proves that without a definite and persistent program of practical church organization there is no hope of realizing the ideal which we have placed before us.

In the autumn of 1813, Thomas Campbell moved to Guernsey County, Ohio, where he engaged in farming and, at the same time conducted "an English mercantile academy." While thus engaged, he delivered a series of weekly addresses upon "The Christian Institution" to such audiences as could be induced to listen to them. It is the testimony of his son that "the religious mind of the community was so strongly attached to their respective church establishments" that his father labored with "but little apparent success." Discouraged by the failure of his efforts, in the autumn of 1815 the elder Campbell moved to the city of Pittsburg where he again attempted "to constitute a worshiping congregation upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets." It was here also that he opened another "mercantile academy," in which building his parishioners met on the first day of the week to break the loaf. Here again he was doomed to failure so far as any extensive influence upon the community was concerned. The little group which he gathered around him was unable to support his work and feeling that he might be more useful in another field, in the fall of 1817 he moved to Kentucky. Here he came in contact with the Baptist churches and was received with very considerable cordiality. The chief obstacle to his teaching which presented itself was the almost universal belief in the mystical plan of conversion which existed not only in one but in almost all the orthodox denominations. While Mr. Campbell gave full value to the mystical element in religion, he looked upon conversion as essentially an ethical and rational process dependent

upon a change of will on the part of the convert. He gained some adherents in Kentucky but accomplished nothing permanent. As a result, in the autumn of 1819 he moved back to Washington County, Pennsylvania, and located in the vicinity of the two congregations which he had planted some ten years before.

After the lapse of a decade, Thomas Campbell was surprised to find that the principles, which he had so fondly hoped would be received with joy by the Christian world at large, had secured the acceptance of only six small congregations, numbering in all not more than two hundred souls. Moreover these six churches, in 1815, had united with the Redstone Baptist Association and were regarded by their contemporaries as members of that denomination. It is true that the terms upon which the union was constituted left the little group, under the direction of the Campbells, free to practice their own religion in their own way, but even with this stipulation they found their position uncomfortable. The situation reached a climax when Alexander Campbell delivered his celebrated "Sermon on the Law" in the early fall of 1816. Such was the opposition to this discourse among the Baptist leaders that the Campbells only escaped excommunication by withdrawing prematurely from the Redstone Association and uniting with the Mahoning Baptist Association on the Ohio Western Reserve. In the course of another decade, under the fiery evangelistic preaching of Walter Scott, the churches belonging to this group definitely launched the independent propaganda of the Disciples of Christ. With their convictions, they could no more have remained in the Baptist fellowship than their leaders had been able to remain in the Presbyterian fellowship. Occasionally certain well intending brethren who are not conversant with the facts express their regrets because of the failure of our fathers to stay with the Presbyterians or the Baptists. Those who have read the history of this early period with care know only too well how

utterly impossible was any such consummation of the Campbells' program.

With the launching of the independent movement, so ably directed by Walter Scott and his associates, the Christian Association of Washington County, Pennsylvania, came to an end. Although for some years before its existence had been purely nominal, it had nevertheless served its purpose. It proved as clearly as experience can prove anything that the new wine cannot be put in old bottles and that the finest idealism, in order to achieve results, must be reduced to a practical basis. It would be well for those who believe in the program of Thomas Campbell to profit by his experience. Doubtless conditions in the religious world today are different from what they were at the beginning of the nineteenth century. Nevertheless, the same general principles which were applicable to the field of religion at that time are still worthy of consideration. There is nothing so far as the writer can see, in the developments of the past hundred years to invalidate the lessons taught by the early history of the Declaration and Address.

**T**HE Declaration, from the note which it strikes in its first sentence down to the last word in the last section of the document, is definitely and distinctively Protestant. It begins its argument by an assertion of the right of private judgment which Luther fought for so staunchly in the sixteenth century and which has been the heart of the Protestant gospel ever since. The statement of this fundamental principle by Thomas Campbell not only includes the right but also the duty of personal judgment and action. He stakes his whole case upon this vital principle. The situation in the Christian world at large, and especially "in this western country," emphasizes the responsibility which is laid upon all Christians "not only to think but also to act."

The stern Puritanical background of Thomas Campbell's theology comes out clearly in this pronounce-

ment. It is as though he feels himself, in the spirit of the old prophets, divinely commissioned to go about his new work. There is something about the opening sentences of the Declaration which makes one unconsciously recall that oft repeated expression of the Old Testament "and the word of the Lord came" to this or the other prophet. No doubt Mr. Campbell would have been the last man to assert any inspiration of this character as characterizing his own activities. Nevertheless, the prophetic note clings to his words and his history will afford him a place among the latter day prophets in the annals of the church.

Not only does the Declaration assert the essentially Protestant principle of the right of private judgment, but it also emphasizes what has been called the formal principle of the Reformation; that is, the supreme authority of the Scriptures. Campbell was a disciple of Chillingworth in that he asserted that the Bible and the Bible alone is the religion of Protestantism. The Bible, interpreted freely in accordance with the individual or rational conscience and judgment, furnishes the religious standard of the Declaration. The Bible is authoritative for Thomas Campbell in the fullest sense of the word, but he will not be bound by "any human interpretation" of the text. Critics of Mr. Campbell, at this point, have urged that his one principle contradicts the other, that is to say that both the Scripture text and the personal judgment of the individual cannot be authoritative. If we make the latter supreme, it reduces the other to unimportance and vice versa. This is the favorite argument of what are sometimes called the "inner consciousness advocates." Their position is that there can be no authority beyond individual conscience and judgment inasmuch as these must determine the meaning of Scripture and therefore possess the ultimate and final word. It is quite trivial, they say, to speak of the Bible as the only authority when by that expression you mean always the Bible as inter-

preted by this or the other person. Where there is no common standard of interpretation there is no common standard of authority. To talk, therefore, of the Scriptures as supreme, and private judgment as also supreme is to talk nonsense. The Scriptures are authoritative only as you and I interpret them for ourselves, and since I am not bound by your interpretation nor are you bound by mine nor either of us by any other man's, there is no such thing as any common Scripture. I have a Bible and you have a Bible and the other man has a Bible and our Bibles are all different because they are the result of the play of separate intellectual processes upon the text. This being true, we must either give up one thing or the other. We must affirm the authority of the text as interpreted by some definite common principle (the method of Roman Catholicism) or we must assert the right of private judgment as absolute and independent of any other consideration.

We have stated the argument against Mr. Campbell's position somewhat in detail because it appears to be a matter of perennial importance. Protestantism has indeed sought to escape from the dilemma in various ways. The earliest method is what may be called the symbolical; that is, the attempt to unify scriptural interpretation by means of creedal documents. The period of the Reformation, as is well known, was the great creed-making epoch in the history of the world. The reason for this universal desire to write creeds on the part of the revolutionary forces of Christendom is not difficult to find. They had taken the Scriptures as their only authority in opposition to the Catholic dogma of the supremacy of the church. In addition they had asserted the primacy of the right of private judgment. Both doctrines made excellent shibboleths but displayed a tendency, as we have seen, to contradict each other. In order to reconcile them, the Protestant churches resorted with new enthusiasm to the old Greco-Christian panacea of formulating a creed. This creed was supposed to represent the consensus of the private judg-

ments, concerning the essential truths of Scripture, of those who accepted it. Hence, the creed, in the shape of a written constitution for the church, took the place of the Roman Catholic dogma. Theoretically there can be no question but that the Protestant solution was inferior to the Catholic. Crystallized dogma, in the shape of a static and absolutely authoritative creed, is less efficient and workable than the ever shifting and adaptable infallibility of the Vatican. The latter theory makes provision for the changing content of the age while the former theory does not. Hence Catholicism, as a working method, has a superior principle of authority when contrasted with the Protestant dogma of the Bible as interpreted by a static creed.

Of course Protestantism escaped from the dilemma by repudiating in practice what is asserted in theory. Its numerous creeds in no way interfered with the practice of private judgment on the part of their adherents. People accepted the creed and interpreted it as they pleased. What therefore was intended to serve as a universal method of interpretation and in this way to guarantee authority to the text of Scripture proved to be quite worthless. The Scriptures and the creed alike were interpreted by each individual to suit himself and there was no one who could say nay. Hence, the net result of the creedal experiment was to bring thoughtful Protestants back to the point from whence they started, that is the absolute authority of the individual judgment independent of any external consideration whatever.

What solution of the Protestant enigma are we to gather from the platform put forth by Thomas Campbell. It is quite obvious that he rejects *in toto* the creedal method which he saw clearly enough had been definitely discredited by past experience and history. On the other hand, he is a thorough-going Protestant and certainly manifests no sympathy with the Roman Catholic idea of centering authority in the Church.

Still further, he indicates no disposition to surrender either private judgment or the authority of the Scriptures. How, then does he reconcile the two? The answer to this question lies at the very heart of the religious movement which arose, in large measure, as a result of his teachings.

The first consideration which it is necessary to keep in mind in order to understand the doctrine of authority embodied in the Declaration and Address is the belief of its author in the substantial infallibility of what may be called "the common mind." Both Thomas and Alexander Campbell believed in a universal reason which makes possible unity of thought on the part of individuals. This common reason or common mind, when applied to the Scriptures, would necessarily yield the same interpretation and in this way guarantee unity of thought and action. Both of the Campbells rejected the idea that any individual judgment with regard to the Scriptures should be considered authoritative, but they were assured that the judgment of the common mind or the universal reason could not be mistaken. Hence the Scriptures, interpreted as above indicated, constituted for them an infallible and universal authority.

Doubtless some one is asking at this point how the common mind is to be detected, and what guarantee we can have in any given case that our individual private judgment coincides with the universal reason. Mr. Campbell would unquestionably have answered the question by an appeal to the intellectual majority. Whatever the great bulk of thoughtful men agree upon as touching the interpretation of Scripture is doubtless an expression of the common mind upon the subject. Alexander Campbell was rather addicted to quoting the expression *vox populi vox dei* in his debates and public addresses. What he meant by this quotation was simply that the voice of human intelligence as a whole ex-



presses the voice of universal reason and, therefore, the voice of God. It was to this common mind that the Campbells always made their appeal with regard to the various theological positions which they occupied.

**I**T all comes back to this: Reason when given a fair play and a free field, is from God and expresses the divine nature, if not in the highest, certainly in one of its highest forms. Now the Scriptures which are God's word given to man by direct revelation can only be interpreted aright by the divine reason which is God's gift to man for guidance in all the varied activities of life. Of course this divine reason in some cases, and doubtless to a certain extent in all cases, is distorted and obscured by individual passions and prejudices. Herein lies the failure of anarchistic private judgment as a standard of truth. The individual mind is apt to be circumscribed and hemmed in by petty and local considerations which do not permit the universal reason to have full sway. When a large number of minds are taken into account, however, the petty particularities of the individuals who constitute the larger group drop out of sight or negate each other and the conclusions of the common mind stand out with clear unanimity. These conclusions are, therefore, the voice of the universal reason and represent the highest standard of accuracy possible for man.

That the above analysis correctly interprets the Campbell's idea of authority in religion is abundantly confirmed by an appeal to the concrete historical facts in their experience. For example, the question of baptism was decided by them entirely upon the basis of what they believed to be the verdict of the common mind in the matter. Careful study of the subject convinced Alexander Campbell, and later his father, that *the overwhelming consensus of the thoughtful scholarship of the world is in favor of the idea that immersion*

*was the New Testament form of baptism.* This being the case, the universal reason had spoken upon the subject and there was nothing to do but to accept its conclusions. It was not because Thomas Campbell, as an individual, or Alexander, as an individual, reached his own separate and individual conclusion upon the matter, but rather because they saw their conclusions harmonizing with the great body of scholarship of the world that they proclaimed what has been styled the "immersion dogma." It was only because they felt that the universal mind had spoken at this point that they committed themselves so unreservedly to the position in question. It should always be remembered that there is not today, and has not been since the time of the Campbells, any real dispute on the part of the world's scholars with regard to the above question.

What is true of baptism is true of every other point in the program of the Campbells. They were not willing to stress any consideration which did not clearly have the voice of the common mind behind it. They practiced the weekly observance of the Lord's Supper because they believed that New Testament precedent was in favor of it, and also because the practice was of great utility in holding together the congregations, especially when they were weak and unable to secure a regular minister. Inasmuch as the common mind had not spoken upon this question with any degree of definiteness, however, they did not make it in any respect a "dogma." The same thing was true of the congregational polity which they adhered to as preferable to any other, though not as absolutely authoritative. Upon the question of human creeds their position was the same. The common mind, as represented in the practically unanimous voice of scholarship, has agreed that a simple confession of faith in Christ as the Messiah and Redeemer of the world was the only creed known

to the New Testament era. Hence the Campbells rejected all human creeds.

If the doctrine of the universal reason is accepted, there is no reason why the Scriptures, as interpreted by this principle, should not be regarded as the ultimate authority in religion. Such a viewpoint means something far more than simply the assertion of the infallibility of private judgment. It rises from the separate-ness and particularity of the "inner consciousness" theory to the broad field of prophetic revelation interpreted and made clear from age to age by the ever living and universal reason which guarantees all civilization and progress. That reason itself is indeed not the last word. *The last word is revelation interpreted by reason.* It is this sort of interpretation to which Thomas Campbell makes his appeal in the *Declaration and Address*.

It is scarcely necessary to emphasize the vital connection which the above theory of authority involves in dealing with the matter of Christian union. The Campbells, while fully alive to both the folly and the sin of sectarianism, as so many pages in the *Declaration and Address* bear witness, were discriminating enough to see the uselessness of talking about Christian union without proposing any definite plan for such union. There is not the slightest scintilla of evidence that either of them was ever guilty of the logical fallacy of advocating an end without at least suggesting a possible means of achieving it. The supreme merit of their contribution to the Christian union problem lies precisely in the fact that they furnished a definite and concrete proposal by which unity could be obtained. Of course, they recognized the fact that the only hope for securing the common sentiment which is indispensable for any real unity depends upon the possession of the common mind by Christians of all groups and parties. If the scattered partisans of Christendom can be brought to

recognize and accept the dictates of the universal reason, there is no adequate ground for separatism. Any sort of unity which does not involve the thinking together, presupposed in the possession of the common reason, the Campbells saw was hopeless. With patchwork compromises in matters of faith or lowest common denominators which pare down truth until it becomes invisible, they had no patience. Religion demands not the minimum but the maximum of truth made available by the strenuous application of the divine reason to the data of inspiration furnished in the Scriptures. When people think together in the broader intellectual fellowship of the universal reason, they will be ready to unite effectively in all the varied fields of Christian activity. Until this intellectual fellowship can be secured, it is useless to talk about Christian union.

The Christian world at large, a hundred years after the time of Thomas Campbell, still debates the problem of church unity.

We believe that if the Christian forces ever get together, it will be upon the broad lines involved in the philosophical background of the *Declaration and Address*.

PART II  
THE NECESSITY FOR CHRISTIAN  
UNION



## PART II—THE NECESSITY FOR CHRISTIAN UNION

**I**N the analysis of the *Declaration and Address*, which we are now following, the introductory statement, styled by Thomas Campbell himself the “Declaration,” may be considered as Part One of the completed document. This section we have already outlined and discussed in detail. We come now to Part Two which may be appropriately entitled “The Necessity for Christian Union.” This division, the author himself styled “The Address.” In the edition of 1809, it is headed as follows:

### Address

To all that love our Lord Jesus Christ, in sincerity, throughout all the Churches, the following Address is most respectfully submitted.

Dearly Beloved Brethren,

The “Dearly Beloved Brethren,” above referred to, were the ministers in all churches and especially in the Presbyterian fold to whom Thomas Campbell thought his arguments would make special appeal. The author then proceeds with his main argument:

### I. TEXT OF THE DECLARATION

*Love and Unity—The Divine Plan.*—That it is the grand design and native tendency of our holy religion to reconcile and unite men to God, and to each other, in truth and love, to the glory of God, and their own present and eternal good, will not, we presume, be denied, by any of the genuine subjects of Christianity. The nativity of its Divine author was announced from heaven, by a host of angels, with high acclamations of “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace and good-will toward men.” The whole tenor of that Divine book which contains its institutes, in all its gracious declarations, precepts, ordinances, and holy ex-

amples, most expressively and powerfully inculcates this. In so far, then, as this holy unity and unanimity in faith and love is attained, just in the same degree is the glory of God and the happiness of men promoted and secured.

Impressed with those sentiments, and, at the same time, grievously affected with those sad divisions which have so awfully interfered with the benign and gracious intention of our holy religion, by exacting its professed subjects to bite and devour one another, we cannot suppose ourselves justifiable in withholding the mite of our sincere and humble endeavors to heal and remove them.

*Disastrous Effects of Division.*—What awful and distressing effects have those sad divisions produced! what aversions, what reproaches, what backbitings, what evil surmisings, what angry contentions, what enmities, what excommunications, and even persecution!!! And, indeed, this must, in some measure, continue to be the case so long as those schisms exist; for, saith the apostle, where envying and strife is *there* is confusion and every evil work.

What dreary effects of those accursed divisions are to be seen, even in this highly favored country, where the sword of the civil magistrate has not as yet learned to serve at the altar. Have we not seen congregations broken to pieces, neighborhoods of professing Christians first thrown into confusion by party contentions, and, in the end, entirely deprived of Gospel ordinances; while, in the meantime, large settlements and tracts of country remain to this day entirely destitute of a Gospel ministry, many of them in little better than a state of heathenism, the Churches being either so weakened with divisions that they cannot send them ministers, or the people so divided among themselves that they will not receive them? Several, at the same time, who live at the door of a preached Gospel, dare not in conscience go to hear it, and, of course, enjoy little more advantage, in that respect, than if living in the midst of heathens. How seldom do many in those circumstances enjoy the dispensation of the Lord's Supper, that great ordinance of unity and love. How sadly, also, does this broken and confused state of things interfere with that spiritual intercourse among Christians, one with another, which is so essential to their edification and comfort, in the midst of a present evil world; so divided in sentiment, and, of course, living at such distances, that but few of the same opinion, or party, can conveniently and frequently assemble for religious purposes, or enjoy a due frequency of ministerial attentions.

And even where things are in a better state with respect to settled Churches, how is the tone of discipline released under the influence of a party spirit; many being afraid to exercise it with due strictness, lest their people should leave them, and, under the



cloak of some specious pretense, find refuge in the bosom of another party; while, lamentable to be told, so corrupted is the Church with those accursed divisions, that there are but few so base as not to find admission into some professing party or other. Thus, in a great measure, is that Scriptural purity of communion banished from the Church of God, upon the due preservation of which much of her comfort, glory, and usefulness depend.

To complete the dread result of our woeful divisions, one evil yet remains, of a very awful nature: the Divine displeasure justly provoked with this sad perversion of the Gospel of peace, the Lord withhold his gracious influential presence from his ordinances, and not unfrequently gives up the contentious authors and abettors of religious discord to fall into grievous scandals, or visits them with judgments, as he did the house of Eli. Thus, while professing Christians bite and devour one another, they are consumed one of another, or fall a prey to the righteous judgments of God; meantime, the truly religious of all parties are grieved, the weak stumbled, the graceless and profane hardened, the mouths of infidels opened to blaspheme religion, and thus the only thing under heaven divinely efficacious to promote and secure the present spiritual and eternal good of man, even the Gospel of the blessed Jesus, is reduced to contempt, while multitudes, deprived of a Gospel ministry, as has been observed, fall an easy prey to seducers, and so become the dupes of almost unheard-of delusions.

*Special Responsibility of the Church in America.*—Are not such the visible effects of our sad divisions, even in this otherwise happy country? Say, dear brethren, are not these things so? Is it not then your incumbent duty to endeavor, by all scriptural means, to have those evils remedied? Who will say that it is not? And does it not peculiarly belong to *you*, who occupy the place of Gospel ministers, to be leaders in this laudable undertaking? Much depends upon *your* hearty concurrence and zealous endeavors. The favorable opportunity which Divine Providence has put into your hands, in this happy country, for the accomplishment of so great a good is, in itself, a consideration of no small encouragement. A country happily exempted from the baneful influence of a civil establishment of any peculiar form of Christianity; from under the direct influence of the anti-Christian hierarchy; and, at the same time, from any formal connection with the devoted nations that have given their strength and power unto the beast; in which, of course, no adequate reformation can be accomplished, until the word of God be fulfilled, and the vials of his wrath poured out upon them.

Happy exemption, indeed, from being the object of such awful judgments! Still more happy will it be for us if we duly

esteem and improve those great advantages, for the high and valuable ends for which they are manifestly given, and sure where much is given much also will be required. Can the Lord expect, or require, anything less from a people in such unhampered circumstances—from a people so liberally furnished with all means and mercies, than a thorough reformation in all things, civil and religious, according to his word? Why should we suppose it? And would not such an improvement of our precious privileges be equally conducive to the glory of God, and our own present and everlasting good?

*Grounds for Hope of Union.*—The auspicious phenomena of the times furnish collateral arguments of a very encouraging nature, that our dutiful and pious endeavors shall not be in vain in the Lord. Is it not the day of the Lord's vengeance upon the anti-Christian world—the year of recompenses for the controversy of Zion? Surely, then, the time to favor her is come; even the set time. And is it not said that Zion shall be built in troublous times? Have not greater efforts been made, and more done, for the promulgation of the Gospel among the nations, since the commencement of the French revolution, than had been for many centuries prior to that event? And have not the churches, both in Europe and America, since that period, discovered a more than usual concern for the removal of contentions, for the healing of divisions, for the restoration of a Christian and brotherly intercourse one with another, and for the promotion of each other's spiritual good, as the printed documents upon these subjects amply testify?

Should *we* not, then, be excited by these considerations to concur with all our might to help forward this good work; that what yet remains to be done, may be fully accomplished. And what though the well-meant endeavors after union have not, in some instances, entirely succeeded to the wish of all parties, should this dissuade us from the attempt! Indeed, should Christians cease to contend earnestly for the sacred articles of faith and duty once delivered to the saints, on account of the opposition and scanty success which, in many instances, attend their faithful and honest endeavors; the Divine cause of truth and righteousness might have long ago been relinquished. And is there anything more formidable in the Goliath schism, than in many other evils which Christians have to combat? Or, has the Captain of Salvation sounded a desist from pursuing, or proclaimed a truce with this deadly enemy that is sheathing its sword in the very bowels of his church, rending and mangling his mystical body into pieces? Has he said to his servants, Let it alone? If not, where is the warrant for a cessation of endeavors to have it removed? On the other hand are we not better instructed by sage experience, how to proceed in this business, having before our eyes the inadvertencies and mistakes of others, which have hitherto, in many instances, prevented the desired success?

Thus taught by experience, and happily furnished with the accumulated instructions of those that have gone before us, earnestly laboring in this good cause, let us take unto ourselves the whole armor of God, and, having our feet shod with the preparation of the Gospel of peace, let us stand fast by this important duty with all perseverance. Let none that love the peace of Zion be discouraged, much less offended, because that an object of such magnitude does not, in the first instance, come forth recommended by the express suffrage of the mighty or the many. This consideration, if duly weighed, will neither give offense, nor yield discouragement to any one that considers the nature of the thing in question in connection with what has been already suggested. Is it not a matter of universal right, a duty equally belonging to every citizen of Zion, to seek her good? In this respect, no one can claim a preference above his fellows, as to any peculiar, much less exclusive obligations.

And, as for authority, it can have no place in this business; for, surely, none can suppose themselves invested with a Divine right, as to anything peculiarly belonging to them, to call the attention of their brethren to this dutiful and important undertaking. For our part, we entertain no such arrogant presumption; nor are we inclined to impute the thought to any of our brethren, that this good work should be let alone till such time as they may think proper to come forward and sanction the attempt, by their invitation and example. It is an open field, an extensive work, to which all are equally welcome, equally invited.

Should we speak of competency, viewing the greatness of the object, and the manifold difficulties which lie in the way of its accomplishment; we would readily exclaim, with the apostle, Who is sufficient for these things? But, upon recollecting ourselves, neither would *we* be discouraged; persuaded with him, that, as the work in which we are engaged, so, likewise, *our* sufficiency is of God. But, after all, both the mighty and the many are with us. The Lord himself, and all that are truly his people, are declaredly on our side. The prayers of all the churches, nay, the prayers of Christ himself (John 17:20, 23), and of all that have ascended to his heavenly kingdom, are with us. The blessing out of Zion is pronounced upon our undertaking. "Pray for the Peace of Jerusalem; they shall prosper that love Thee." With such encouragements as these, what should deter us from the heavenly enterprise, or render hopeless the attempt of accomplishing, in due time, an entire union of all the churches in faith and practice, according to the Word of God? Not that we judge ourselves competent to effect such a thing; we utterly disclaim the thought; but we judge it our bounden duty to make the attempt, by using all due means in our power to promote it; and also, that we have sufficient reason to rest assured that our humble and well-meant endeavors shall not be in vain in the Lord.

## II. COMMENT UPON THE TEXT

WE now begin the central portion of Thomas Campbell's argument. The "Declaration," as he styled it, was intended solely for introductory purposes and by way of apology for the main thesis. The author then turns to the full statement of his position and advances all of the arguments which he deems necessary to support his new departure.

The first point which he makes is that unity with God and fellowship with each other is the "grand design" and "native tendency" of the Christian religion. There can be no question but that in this central proposition he strikes the highest possible level. Unity and love are the cardinal characteristics of the Gospel and when the Church fails to manifest them it proves recreant to its supreme trust. This fact is often forgotten in our consideration of the problem of Christian union. We are apt to be very conscientious with regard to subsidiary and subordinate items of the faith and not at all conscientious about the sin of schism which touches the very heart of our religion. Thomas Campbell is on sure ground in his emphasis upon the supreme place of unity in the scheme of redemption.

Perhaps nowhere else in irenical literature do we find such a vivid impeachment of the exceeding sinfulness of sectarianism as is presented in the opening sections of the *Declaration and Address*. Even a treble exclamation point cannot satisfy the author in his desire to make clear the evils of division. One feels as he reads his words that the experience of Mr. Campbell must have been of such a character as to influence him most profoundly. There is nothing academic or theoretical about the language which he uses. He cites particular cases, "large tracts of country entirely destitute of a gospel ministry," "Churches so weakened" that they cannot send out missionaries and the laity so divided that they "will not receive" those who by chance may come to

them. Special reference is made to the Lord's Supper, which is characterized as pre-eminently the ordinance which symbolizes the unity of the Church of Christ. Thomas Campbell was not a sacramentarian and his special stress upon the eucharist must be understood as due to a simple desire to give the sacrament its rightful place in the scheme of formal religion.

It is the moral aspect of disunion which impresses the author of the *Declaration and Address* most profoundly. There are "grievous scandals," "visitations of judgment," "the weak are caused to stumble," the graceless and profane "are hardened," "the mouths of infidels opened to blaspheme religion," and the gospel of Jesus is "reduced to contempt." Those who have had access to the early history of America at the beginning of the nineteenth century will readily understand that these are not exaggerated statements. Because of its sectarian divisions, the Church was becoming more and more enfeebled and unable to cope with the moral evils of the time. Following the War of Independence, a flood of skepticism swept over the country and brought with it a marked deterioration in the public morals. This period of moral and religious decline had reached its lowest level shortly before Mr. Campbell came to America. The condition of the Church pictured in the opening pages of the *Declaration and Address* is strikingly true of the facts narrated in the history of the time.

While there is little direct reference to the subject, there can be no question but that Thomas Campbell intended to give a distinctly premillenarian color to his appeal for Christian union. It is obvious that he does not accept the idea that things are to get worse until the end, for if this had been his view he would not have sent forth the *Declaration and Address* upon its mission of reconciliation. At the same time he appears, quite clearly to have identified the events of current history with the predictions of the Apocalypse. The *Declara-*

*tion and Address*, it will be recalled, dates from the year 1809. This was the time when Napoleon's power was at its height. He had become emperor in 1804, had overthrown the Austrians and Russians at Austerlitz in 1805 and had completely crushed Prussia at Jena in 1806. In 1807 the treaty of Tilset, which probably marked the highest point in his career was signed. The few years which followed saw Napoleon the undisputed lord of Europe. Intensely hated as he was by the peoples of other nations and especially by the English, the French emperor, in the eyes of many devout Christians, was clearly identified with the Beast spoken of in the book of Revelation. This is undoubtedly the meaning of the reference which Mr. Campbell makes in his argument to "the devoted nations that have given their strength and power unto the Beast." Evidently he looked for still greater convulsions on the continent in accordance with the word of the prophecy. "No adequate reformation can be accomplished," he says, "until the word of God be fulfilled and the vials of his wrath poured out upon them" (the nations).

Along with this somewhat pessimistic interpretation of history, there is a striking note of optimism in the emphasis upon the possibilities of a rebirth of Christianity in the new world. Here there is no union of Church and State such as hampered religious freedom abroad, nor is there any entangling alliance with foreign nations which would be calculated to plunge the country into the maelstrom of old world politics. Thomas Campbell sees in all of these things an opportunity for a restoration of essential Christianity and for getting rid of the sectarian divisions which had become hopelessly crystallized across the seas. He seems to have dreamed of a united church here in America in much the same way that certain Christian leaders in the Orient are dreaming of a united Christian church in China at the present time. He is not blind to the difficulties in the way but he feels that his cause is just and

that there can be no excuse for hesitancy on his part in the matter of proclaiming it. There is a note of profound humility in his reference to his own "sufficiency" for the task which lies before him. "He utterly disclaims the thought" that he is competent to effect the union of the churches in faith and practice. Nevertheless he judges it to be his "bounden duty" to make the attempt, being assured that his humble endeavors will not be in vain in the Lord.

### III. TEXT OF THE DECLARATION

*Christian Union, the Common Cause for All Christians.*—The cause that we advocate is not our own peculiar cause, nor the cause of any party, considered as such; it is a common cause, the cause of Christ and our brethren of all denominations. All that we presume, then, is to do what we humbly conceive to be *our* duty, in connection with our brethren; to each of whom it equally belongs, as to us, to exert himself for this blessed purpose. And as we have no just reason to doubt the concurrence of our brethren to accomplish an object so desirable in itself, and fraught with such happy consequences, so neither can we look forward to that happy event which will forever put an end to our hapless divisions, and restore to the Church its primitive unity, purity, and prosperity, but in the pleasing prospect of their hearty and dutiful concurrence.

*The New Testament Church, the Basis of Union.*—Dearly beloved brethren, why should *we* deem it a thing incredible that the Church of Christ, in this highly favored country, should resume that original unity, peace, and purity which belong to its constitution, and constitute its glory? Or, is there anything that can be justly deemed necessary for this desirable purpose, but to conform to the model and adopt the practice of the primitive Church, expressly exhibited in the New Testament? Whatever alterations this might produce in any or in all of the Churches, should, we think, neither be deemed inadmissible nor ineligible. Surely such alteration would be every way for the better, and not for the worse, unless we should suppose the divinely inspired rule to be faulty, or defective. Were we, then, in our Church constitution and managements, to exhibit a complete conformity to the apostolic Church, would we not be, in that respect, as perfect as Christ intended we should be? And should not this suffice us?

*Christians Separated by Non-essentials.*—It is, to us, a pleasing consideration that all the Churches of Christ which mutually

acknowledge each other as such, are not only agreed in the great doctrines of faith and holiness, but are also materially agreed as to the positive ordinances of the Gospel institution; so that our differences at most, are about the things in which the kingdom of God does not consist, that is, about matters of private opinion or human invention. What a pity that the kingdom of God should be divided about such things! Who, then, would not be the first among us to give up human inventions in the worship of God, and to cease from imposing his private opinions upon his brethren, that our breaches might *thus* be healed? Who would not willingly conform to the original pattern laid down in the New Testament, for *this* happy purpose? Our dear brethren of all denominations will consider that we have our educational prejudices and particular customs to struggle against as well as they. But this we do sincerely declare, that there is nothing we have hitherto received as matter of faith or practice which is not expressly taught and enjoined in the word of God, either in express terms or approved precedent, that we would not heartily relinquish that so we might return to the original constitutional unity of the Christian Church; and, in this happy unity, enjoy full communion with all our brethren, in peace and charity. The like dutiful condescension we candidly expect of all that are seriously impressed with a sense of the duty they owe to God, to each other, and to their perishing brethren of mankind. To this we call we invite, our brethren of all denominations, by all the sacred motives which we have avouched as the impulsive reasons of our thus addressing them.

*Christian Union at its Lowest Terms.*—You are all, dear brethren, equally included as the objects of our love and esteem. With you all we desire to unite in the bonds of an entire Christian unity—Christ alone being the *head*, the center, his word the *rule*, an explicit belief of, and manifest conformity to it, in all things—*the terms*. More than this, you will not require of us; and less we cannot require of you; nor, indeed, can we reasonably suppose any would desire it, for what good purpose would it serve? We dare neither assume nor propose the trite, indefinite distinction between essentials and non-essentials, in matters of revealed truth and duty; firmly persuaded, that, whatever may be their comparative importance, simply considered, the high obligation of the Divine authority revealing, or enjoining them, renders the belief or performance of them absolutely essential to us, in so far as we know them. And to be ignorant of anything God has revealed, can neither be our duty nor our privilege. We humbly presume, then, dear brethren, you can have no relevant objection to meet us upon this ground. And, we again beseech you, let it be known that



it is the invitation of but few; by your accession we shall be many; and whether few, or many, in the first instance, it is all one with respect to the event which must ultimately await the full information and hearty concurrence of all. Besides, whatever is to be done, must begin, some time, some where; and no matter where, nor by whom, if the Lord puts his hand to the work, it must surely prosper. And has he not been graciously pleased, upon many signal occasions, to bring to pass the greatest events from very small beginnings, and even by means the most unlikely. Duty then is ours; but events belong to God.

*Christian Union, Reasonable and Timely.*—We hope, then, what we urge will neither be deemed an unreasonable nor an unseasonable undertaking. Why should it be thought unseasonable? Can any time be assigned, while things continue as they are, that would prove more favorable for such an attempt, or what could be supposed to make it so? Might it be the approximation of parties to a greater nearness, in point of public profession and similarity of customs? Or might it be expected from a gradual decline of bigotry? As to the former it is a well-known fact, that where the difference is least, the opposition is always managed with a degree of vehemence inversely proportioned to the merits of the cause. With respect to the latter, though, we are happy to say, that in some cases and places, and, we hope, universally, bigotry is upon the decline; yet we are not warranted, either by the past or present, to act upon that supposition. We have, as yet, by this means seen no such effect produced; nor indeed could we reasonably expect it; for there will always be multitudes of weak persons in the Church, and these are generally most subject to bigotry; add to this, that while divisions exist, there will always be found interested men who will not fail to support them; nor can we at all suppose that Satan will be idle to improve an advantage so important to the interests of his kingdom. And, let it be further observed upon the whole, that, in matters of similar importance to our secular interests, we would by no means content ourselves with such kind of reasoning.

We might further add, that the attempt here suggested not being of a partial, but of general nature, it can have no just tendency to excite the jealousy, or hurt the feelings of any party. On the contrary, every effort toward a permanent Scriptural unity among the Churches, upon the solid basis of universally acknowledged and self-evident truths, must have the happiest tendency to enlighten and conciliate, by thus manifesting to each other their mutual charity and zeal for the truth: “Whom I love in the truth,” saith the apostle, “and not I only, but also all they that have known the truth; for the truth’s

sake, which is in us, and shall be with us forever." Indeed, if no such Divine and adequate basis of union can be fairly exhibited as will meet the approbation of every upright and intelligent Christian, nor such mode of procedure adopted in favor of the weak as will not oppress their consciences, then the accomplishment of this grand object upon principle must be forever impossible. There would, upon this supposition, remain no other way of accomplishing it, but merely by voluntary compromise, and good-natured accommodation. That such a thing, however, will be accomplished, one way or other, will not be questioned by any that allow themselves to believe that the commands and prayers of our Lord Jesus Christ will not utterly prove ineffectual.

Whatever way, then, it is to be effected, whether upon the solid basis of Divinely revealed truth, or the good-natured principle of Christian forbearance and gracious condescension, is it not equally practicable, equally eligible to us, as ever it can be to any; unless we should suppose ourselves destitute of that Christian temper and discernment which is essentially necessary to qualify us to do the will of our gracious Redeemer, whose express command to his people is, that there be "no divisions among them; but that they all walk by the same rule, speak the same thing, and be perfectly joined together in the same mind, and in the same judgment?" We believe then it is as practicable as it is eligible. Let us attempt it. "Up, and be doing, and the Lord will be with us."

#### IV. COMMENT UPON THE DECLARATION

THOMAS CAMPBELL was oppressed with the feeling that the movement which the *Declaration and Address* inaugurated might be regarded as a particular hobby of his own, or as something which did not involve Christians of all groups and classes. He therefore, takes great care to enunciate the universality of his plea for Christian union and again and again disclaims any desire to assume leadership in the work of reunion. He wishes it to be thoroughly understood that he is not seeking prominence or glory of any kind, but that he is simply trying to discharge, on his own score, an obligation which rests equally upon every other Christian. Few religious reformers have been more humble than was the author of the *Declaration and Address*. Although absolutely fear-

less and courageous in the discharge of duty, he was self-effacing and possessed the New Testament spirit of meekness to an extraordinary degree.

Mr. Campbell refers frequently in this section of the *Declaration* to "our brethren of all denominations." This oft repeated phrase should be sufficient answer to the accusation, sometimes made, that the Campbells did not regard the members of denominational churches as Christians and brethren. Nothing could be more foreign to the whole spirit of the *Declaration and Address* than such a statement. There is no assumption of superiority, no "holier than thou" attitude anywhere in the document. The author recognizes the essential Christianity of all the followers of Jesus and desires to unite them that this Christianity may have full expression for the redemption of the world. The idea that the members of denominational churches are not Christians is exactly contradictory to the whole thesis of Thomas Campbell. His fundamental presupposition is that they *are* Christians and because they are Christians they ought to be together. If he had not regarded them as Christians, he would not have been interested in seeing them united. No Church in christendom gives more complete and adequate expression to its belief in the catholicity of Christianity than the churches belonging to the religious movement inaugurated by the Campbells.

It is true that the Disciples of Christ, from the beginning, have always opposed the sectarian ideal and have insisted that denominationalism, both in theory and practice, is wrong. They have never, however, disputed the essential Christianity of those who still adhere to the denominational order. They believe that these brethren are Christians in spite of denominationalism and not because of it.

Doubtless some one is ready to remark, at this point, that the Disciple practice of requiring immersion of all who become members of their churches is not in harmony

with their theoretical attitude toward other Christians. Such an impression is due to a failure to understand the genius of their position. That position involves the presentation to the world of an ideal platform for Christian union. If this platform is to be worth anything at all, it must be faithfully followed. To make exceptions or to deviate from the ideal would inevitably destroy the whole plea for which they stand. That plea includes among other things the practice of a catholic ideal of baptism. Now it is conceded with substantial unanimity that immersion was not only the form of baptism which is portrayed in the New Testament and which prevailed in the Apostolic era, but it is also the only form of baptism which is universally accepted as valid by Christians of all groups and classes.

It is through no desire to impeach the essential Christianity of those who have not been immersed, nor is it through any assumption of superiority on their own part that the Disciples of Christ adhere to the uniform practice of immersion as the form of baptism. It is simply because they feel assured that to destroy the ideality of their plea in any particular could only mean in the end the destruction of their program for Christian union. It is quite true that the anomalous situation which results from loyalty to their principles is at times unfortunate and embarrassing. So long, however, as sectarianism prevails in the world, Christians can scarcely hope to avoid embarrassment. The way to escape from such unfortunate and unpleasant conditions, is not by compromise or by deflection from principle, but only by the ultimate and complete abolition of the sectarian order.

The basis of union which is indicated throughout the *Declaration and Address* in no wise differs from the plea which the followers of Thomas Campbell still present to the Christian world. In the language of the *Declaration*, the original unity, peace and purity of the Church of Christ can be secured only by conformity to the model and the adoption of the practice of the primitive church

as expressly exhibited in the New Testament. Any alterations which might be produced in the churches by conformity to this program, the author thinks should "neither be deemed inadmissible nor ineligible," and he adds by way of supporting his position that whatever alterations might have to be made would be in every way for the better, and not for the worse, "*unless we should suppose the divinely inspired rule to be faulty or defective.*" So sure is Thomas Campbell that the Restoration of the New Testament Church and of the Apostolic order in general will solve the problem of union that he adds: "Were we, then, in our Church constitution and managements, to exhibit a complete conformity to the Apostolic church, would we not be in that respect, as perfect as Christ intended we should be? And should not this suffice us?"

It has been asserted at times that the elder Campbell did not advocate the basis for unity which was later advocated by his son and by the vast majority of those who have adhered to the program of the Disciples. Thomas Campbell, it is said, believed in Christian union but was not especially interested in the restoration of the New Testament Church. It was Alexander who laid special stress upon the restoration program and thus deflected the movement inaugurated by his father from its original pathway and purpose. It is difficult to see how any one can hold such a position if he is familiar with the language and spirit of the *Declaration and Address*. Not only in the passages quoted above, but indeed throughout the document, the plain assumption is made that the only real and substantial hope for union lies in the restoration of the Apostolic order.

The underlying thesis of the *Declaration and Address* is the belief that Christians of all parties are separated by non-essentials and that they are in reality at one. as the author said, "in the great doctrines of faith and holiness," and also with regard "to the positive ordinances

of Gospel institution.” “Private opinion” or “human invention,” Mr. Campbell regards as the chief contributing cause of disunion. Essential things, he is convinced, cannot be a matter of difference since the universal reason must secure harmonious agreement with regard to them. This is a remarkable anticipation of modern scientific analysis in the frank admission “our dear brethren of all denominations will please to consider that we have our educational prejudices and particular customs to struggle with as well as they.” It is only upon the basis of the truth containing in this quotation that Christian unity can be hoped for. So long as each individual considers himself infallibly inspired and is unwilling to concede that his views, like that of others, are for the most part the product of inherited prejudices, local environment, and educational processes in general, there is not much hope for union. When we all get ready to admit that there is at least a possibility that each of us may be mistaken, the outlook will be much better for agreement.

With regard to Mr. Campbell’s contention that the chief ground of separation which divides Christians into different groups and parties has to do with non-essentials, Christian history will, no doubt, largely substantiate his position. The causes of disunion have been usually of the most trivial character. Moreover, the less significant the reasons for separation, the more intense and bitter has been the sectarian feeling which these causes have aroused. The divisions within the different Protestant denominations of America, which arose at the time of the Civil War period, furnish a case in point. Slavery has been abolished for over a half century and the overwhelming majority of people have forgotten the underlying issues of the conflict between the states, but the churches which originally separated over the war question are still apart.

The Disciples of Christ have sometimes congratulated themselves because they did not allow the war to divide them. Lest they should become puffed up over the mat-

ter, however, they have been given a thorn in the flesh—a veritable messenger of satan to buffet them. What the war could not do, the organ and the missionary society have accomplished in abundant measure. The followers of Thomas Campbell, who have done such violence to his memory as to break fellowship over such trivial nonessentials as have just been indicated, should give attention to his words in the *Declaration and Address*: “What a pity that the Kingdom of God should be divided about such things!” It must be obvious to any unprejudiced mind that people who could destroy the brotherhood of the faithful the ideal of unity because of a difference of opinion concerning the use of a musical instrument in worship have entirely failed to appreciate the meaning of the *Declaration and Address*. This is not the first nor the last time in the course of history, however, when disciples have remained true to the name while at the same time entirely repudiating the principles of their master.

Mr. Campbell expresses his idea of Christian unity at its lowest terms in the following statement:

With you all we desire to unite in the bonds of an entire Christian unity—Christ alone being the head, the center, his word the rule—an explicit belief of, and manifest conformity to it, in all things—*the terms*. More than this, you will not require of us; and less we cannot require of you.

It seems perfectly obvious that these words preclude any scheme of union which could not claim divine authority as interpreted by the common reason of intelligent Christians. The author assumes that it is possible to know God’s will in all vital particulars and that it is also possible for this knowledge to be universally recognized for what it is. In other words, God has spoken to man and has spoken so clearly that right minded people should be able to agree with regard to his message. When they do agree, it would seem to be axiomatic that they should carry out the basis of agreement. So sure is Mr. Campbell, in the main, of the substantial infallibility of his

platform for unity that he discusses only incidentally the possibility of its being erroneous. He is thoroughly convinced that if Christian unity cannot be secured by this means, the situation is well nigh hopeless. To use his own language:

If no such divine and adequate basis of union can be fairly exhibited as will meet the approbation of every upright and intelligent Christian: nor such mode of procedure adopted in favor of the weak, as will not oppress their consciences, then the accomplishment of this grand object upon principle, must be forever impossible.

It seems clear from these and other similar expressions that the restoration of the apostolic order was so appealing to the author of the *Declaration and Address* that he is willing to stake his entire case for union upon this platform. One sometimes wonders what he would think upon this question if he could come back to earth at the present time.

And yet it is, after all, not quite true to the situation to say that Thomas Campbell had no misgivings about his program. Hypothetically, at least, he admits the possibility of failure. In the sentence immediately following the one which has been quoted, he says: "There would upon this supposition remain no other way of accomplishing it (Christian union) but merely by voluntary compromise and good natured accommodation." Just what the exact content of the terms "voluntary compromise" and "good natured accommodation" was, in Mr. Campbell's mind, it is of course impossible for us to say. One can hardly believe that he meant them to cover things which he regarded as essential to the gospel message. The definition of "essentials," however, is not altogether easy—would Thomas Campbell, for example, have regarded the action of baptism as essential? Here, as is true occasionally of other places in the *Declaration*, the author does not appear to be entirely clear in his own mind. This is not due to any special haziness of thinking but simply because he does not regard the question as sufficiently im-



portant to claim much of his thought. He is so sure that all right minded Christians will unite upon the New Testament platform, if they have a fair chance to do so, that he considers it entirely futile and academic to discuss the possibility of their refusal to unite upon such a basis.

The alternative which seemed so improbable in 1809 looms much larger after the passing of a hundred years. Thomas Campbell's platform for union has been before the Christian world for over a century and it has not yet brought about Christian union. It has no doubt had great influence in developing union sentiment and it has gathered an extremely respectable group of followers who thoroughly believe in its efficacy. Nevertheless, the end itself is not here. Union has not yet come upon "principle," as Mr. Campbell puts it. Are we then to try the other alternative of seeking union by "voluntary compromise" or "good natured accommodation"? Mr. Campbell does not definitely answer this question in the *Declaration* doubtless for reasons already indicated. One cannot help wishing that he had given it a little more serious thought. The natural trend of his position makes any sort of compromise impossible. He himself says that his platform affords an opportunity for union upon "the solid basis of divinely revealed truth," but he also says there is at least a speculative possibility of union upon "the good natured principle of Christian forbearance and gracious condescension." Beyond any question he regarded the former basis as far more desirable than the other, but it seems a little dogmatic to say that in the event of the former proving unsuccessful he would have given no countenance to the latter. He seems assured that however unity may come, its coming cannot be forever postponed. The Lord's people must at some time do the will of their gracious Redeemer "whose expressed command to his people is that there be no division among

them; but that they all walk by the same rule, speak the same things, and be perfectly joined together in the same mind, and in the same judgment.”

## V. TEXT OF THE DECLARATION

*Special Appeal to the Ministry in Behalf of Union.* Are we not all praying for that happy event, when there shall be but one fold, as there is but one chief Shepherd? What! shall we pray for a thing, and not strive to obtain it! not use the necessary means to have it accomplished!! What said the Lord to Moses upon a piece of conduct somewhat similar? “Why criest thou unto me? Speak unto the children of Israel that they go forward, but lift thou up thy rod, and stretch out thine hand.”

Let the ministers of Jesus but embrace this exhortation, put their hand to the work, and encourage the people to go forward upon the firm ground of obvious truth, to unite in the bonds of an entire Christian unity; and who will venture to say that it would not soon be accomplished? “Cast ye up, cast ye up, prepare the way, take up the stumbling-block out of the way of my people,” saith your God. To you, therefore, it peculiarly belongs, as the professed and acknowledged leaders of the people, to go before them in this good work, to remove human opinions and the inventions of men out of the way, by carefully separating this chaff from the pure wheat of primary and authentic revelation; casting out that assumed authority, that enacting and decreeing power by which those things have been imposed and established.

To this ministerial department, then, do we look with anxiety. Ministers of Jesus, you can neither be ignorant of nor unaffected with the divisions and corruptions of his Church. His dying commands, his last and ardent prayers for the visible unity of his professing people, will not suffer you to be indifferent in this matter. You will not, you cannot, therefore, be silent upon a subject of such vast importance to his personal glory and the happiness of his people—consistently you cannot; for silence gives consent. You will rather lift up your voice like a trumpet to expose the heinous nature and dreadful consequences of those unnatural and antichristian divisions, which have so rent and ruined the Church of God.

Thus, in justice to your station and character, honored of the Lord, would we hopefully anticipate your zealous and faithful efforts to heal the breaches of Zion; that God’s dear children might dwell together in unity and love; but if otherwise . . . we forbear to utter it. (See Mal. 2:1-10.)

*If Unity Hereafter, Why not Here!* O! that ministers and people would but consider that there are no divisions in the

grave, nor in that world which lies beyond it! there our divisions must come to an end! we must all unite there! Would to God we could find in our hearts to put an end to our short-lived divisions here; that so we might leave a blessing behind us even a happy and united Church.

What gratification, what utility, in the meantime, can our divisions afford either to ministers or people? Should they be perpetuated till the day of judgment, would they convert one sinner from the error of his ways, or save a soul from death? Have they any tendency to hide the multitude of sins that are so dishonorable to God, and hurtful to his people? Do they not rather irritate and produce them? How innumerable and highly aggravated are the sins they have produced, and are at this day producing, both among professors and profane.

*The Duty of Association.* We entreat, we beseech you then, dear brethren, by all those considerations, to concur in this blessed and dutiful attempt. What is the work of all, must be done by all. Such was the work of the tabernacle in the wilderness. Such is the work to which you are called, not by the authority of man, but by Jesus Christ, and God the Father, who raised him from the dead. By this authority are you called to raise up the tabernacle of David, that is fallen down among us, and to set it up upon its own base. This you cannot do, while you run every man to his own house, and consult only the interests of his own party. Until you associate, consult, and advise together, and in a friendly and Christian manner explore the subject, nothing can be done.

We would therefore, with all due deference and submission, call the attention of our brethren to the obvious and important duty of association. Unite with us in the common cause of simple evangelical Christianity; in this glorious cause we are ready to unite with you. United we shall prevail. It is the cause of Christ, and of our brethren throughout all the Churches, of Catholic unity, peace, and purity; a cause that must finally prosper in spite of all opposition. Let us unite to promote it.

*Argument from Fulfilled Prophecy.* Come forward, then, dear brethren, and help with us. Do not suffer yourselves to be lulled asleep by that siren song of the slothful and reluctant professor: "The time is not yet come, the time is not come, saith he: the time that the Lord's house should be built." Believe him not. Do ye not discern the signs of the times? Have not the two witnesses arisen from their state of political death, from under the long proscription of ages? Have they not stood upon their feet, in the presence, and to the consternation and terror of their enemies? Has not their resurrection been accompanied with a great earthquake? Has not the tenth part of the great city been thrown down by it? Has not this event aroused the nations to indignation? Have they not been angry, yea, very angry?

Therefore, O Lord, is thy wrath come upon them, and the time of the dead that they should be avenged, and that thou shouldst give reward to thy servants the prophets, and to them that fear thy name, both small and great; and that thou shouldst destroy them that have destroyed the earth. Who among us has not heard the report of these things, of these lightnings and thunderings and voices; of this tremendous earthquake and great hail; of these awful convulsions and revolutions that have dashed and are dashing to pieces the nations, like a potter's vessel? Yea, have not the remote vibrations of this dreadful shock been felt even by us, whom God has graciously placed at so great a distance?

*The Call to Freedom as well as Unity.* What shall we say to these things? Is it time for us to sit still in our corruptions and divisions, when the Lord, by his word and providence, is so loudly and expressly calling us to repentance, and reformation? "Awake, awake; put on thy strength, O Zion, put on thy beautiful garments, O Jerusalem, the holy city; for henceforth there shall no more come unto thee the uncircumcised and the unclean. Shake thyself from the dust, O Jerusalem; arise, loose thyself from the bands of thy neck, O captive daughter of Zion."

Resume that precious, that dear-bought liberty, wherewith Christ has made his people free; a liberty from subjection to any authority but his own, in matters of religion. Call no man father, no man master on earth; for one is your master, even Christ, and all ye are brethren. Stand fast, therefore, in this precious liberty, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage. For the vindication of this precious liberty have we declared ourselves hearty and willing advocates. For this benign and dutiful purpose have we associated, that by so doing we might contribute the mite of our humble endeavors to promote it, and thus invite our brethren to do the same.

*The Proposed Platform for Union.* As the first-fruits of our efforts for this blessed purpose we respectfully present to their consideration the following propositions, relying upon their charity and candor that they will neither despise nor misconstrue our humble and adventurous attempt. If they should in any measure serve, as a preliminary, to open up the way to a permanent Scriptural unity among the friends and lovers of truth and peace throughout the Churches, we shall greatly rejoice at it.

We by no means pretend to dictate, and could we propose anything more evident, consistent, and adequate, it should be at their service. Their pious and dutiful attention to an object of such magnitude will induce them to communicate to us their emendations; and thus what is sown in weakness will be raised up in power. For certainly the collective graces that are conferred upon the Church, if duly united and brought to bear upon

any point of commanded duty, would be amply sufficient for the right and successful performance of it. "For to one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom; to another the word of knowledge by the same Spirit; to another faith by the same Spirit; to another the discerning of spirits; but the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal. As every man, therefore, hath received the gift, even so minister the same on to another as good stewards of the manifold grace of God."

In the face, then, of such instructions, and with such assurance of an all-sufficiency of Divine grace, as the Church has received from her exalted Head, we can neither justly doubt the concurrence of her genuine members; nor yet their ability, when dutifully acting together, to accomplish anything that is necessary for his glory, and their own good; and certainly their visible unity in truth and holiness, in faith and love, is, of all things, the most conducive to both these, if we may credit the dying commands and prayers of our gracious Lord.

In a matter, therefore, of such confessed importance, our Christian brethren, however unhappily distinguished by party names, will not, cannot, withhold their helping hand. We are as heartily willing to be their debtors, as they are indispensably bound to be our benefactors. Come, then, dear brethren, we most humbly beseech you, cause your light to shine upon our weak beginnings, that we may see to work by it. Evince your zeal for the glory of Christ, and the spiritual welfare of your fellow-Christians, by your hearty and zealous co-operation to promote the unity, purity, and prosperity of his Church.

*Not a New Creed.* Let none imagine that the subjoined propositions are at all intended as an overture toward a new creed or standard for the Church, or as in any wise designed to be made a term of communion; nothing can be further from our intention. They are merely designed for opening up the way, that we may come fairly and firmly to original ground upon clear and certain premises, and take up things just as the apostles left them; that thus disentangled from the accruing embarrassments of intervening ages, we may stand with evidence upon the same ground on which the Church stood at the beginning.

## VI. COMMENT UPON THE ABOVE

THE thorough-going intellectualism of Thomas Campbell and his freedom from any sort of superstitious mysticism are illustrated in his appeal to his brother ministers not to rely simply upon prayers for union but to put forth direct effort to achieve the goal desired. It is useless, he says, "to pray for a thing and not strive

to attain it." Moreover he quotes from the Old Testament to prove that God commanded his people to help him to answer their own prayers. Much of the strength which the Disciples of Christ have possessed with the American public, especially in sections like the great middle west where the typical American is, perhaps, most often found, has been due to the practical character of their message. It is not without significance that the plea of the Disciples has never succeeded as well when proclaimed to races or peoples of more emotional and less practical turn of mind. Thomas Campbell himself was by no means lacking in a certain mystical appreciation, but his prevailing bent was toward the intellectual and practical interpretation of religion. On the whole, he was a pre-Ritschlian rather than a follower of Schleiermacher. He was more a disciple of Abelard than of Anselm or of Bernard. Moreover, his followers have in the main agreed with him in his theological ancestry.

In making his appeal to the clergy, the author of the *Declaration and Address* failed to foresee and to take into account the greatest opposition to the reunion of the church. While the principles of Christian union have been zealously championed by ministers and church leaders, it also holds good that the stronghold of sectarianism has always been in the ranks of the clergy. Laymen in all churches today are anxious to get together, but their clerical advisers at the top keep up the denominational fences. Thomas Campbell seems to have realized the possibility of some such situation in his reference to the second chapter of Malachi. Perhaps also the very fervor of his appeal bears witness to his appreciation of the clerical bias.

The references to "the firm ground of obvious truth" and to "the pure wheat of primary and authentic revelation" indicate the essential faith of the author in his program for Christian union. As we have seen elsewhere, his confidence upon one or two occasions appears

to have faltered just a little, but in the main it was thorough-going and sincere. Doubtless the rapid growth of the movement which he started helped to confirm Thomas Campbell in this faith during his later years. Whether his confidence in the triumph of his program for union would be as great if he were living today is not so clear. In any event, he would doubtless stake the success of his cause upon the question of continued belief in the authority of the New Testament scriptures.

There is something quite modern in the appeal to unity upon earth because of the certain fact of unity beyond the grave. Nothing seems more absurd than the idea of separate heavens for the representatives of different denominational bodies. If one heaven is enough on the other side of the great divide, why should not one church be enough on this side? And, moreover, if people are good enough to go to heaven, why ought they not be good enough to belong to the same ecclesiastical fellowship here? There is perhaps no more telling or forceful plea against sectarianism than is involved in the consideration just mentioned. Nevertheless, its practical value as an argument has never been great. It is too much of a *reductio ad absurdum* for the average man to square his practice with it. "Of course," he says, "I suppose we shall all have to stay together in heaven, but earth isn't heaven and we are still living on earth."

In his emphasis upon the value of conference and Christian association as a means to union, Mr. Campbell was in advance of his age. Nothing, however, could have been truer than his statement "until you associate, consult and advise together; and in friendly and Christian manner explore the subject, nothing can be done." Modern movements toward unity practically all agree that the only way to make progress is by friendly association and conference. People never understand each other until they meet and discuss their differences in the spirit of fraternity. A policy of isolation is the only

policy for individuals or churches to follow if they wish to perpetuate their grievances against others. Very few prejudices, whether theological or otherwise, will survive the test of good-spirited fellowship. The most sectarian churches have discovered that the only way to keep their spirit of separatism unimpaired is by having absolutely nothing to do with their neighbors.

## VII. INTRODUCTION TO THOMAS CAMPBELL'S PLATFORM FOR UNION

**J**UST how far the Campbells adhered to the pre-millennial position is somewhat difficult to determine. Beyond any question, both of them accepted the chiliaric viewpoint to a very considerable degree. Their emphasis upon a return to the New Testament order necessarily involved such an attitude for there is a good deal concerning the imminent Second Coming to be found in its pages. From the days of Montanus, it has been characteristic of reform movements in religion that they have tended toward the catastrophic interpretation of Christianity. Neither of the Campbells was disposed, however, to over-stress this phase of New Testament teaching and the Scotch common sense which characterized both of them prevented any descent into the abyss of absurdities with which modern pre-millenarianism has been so often associated.

To attempt any infallible exegesis of Thomas Campbell's references to the fulfillment of the prophecy contained in Revelation 11 seems rather hazardous. Undoubtedly he refers to well-known political changes in contemporary history, but just which events he has in mind one hesitates to say. Somewhat lengthy experience with the ingenuity which modern pre-millenarians are capable of exhibiting in the interpretation of current history leads one to assume an attitude of caution, in this particular field. Nevertheless it may be worth



while to make one or two suggestions. The "two witnesses" who have arisen "from their state of political death from under the long proscription of ages" would seem to refer to two of the nations liberated by the Napoleonic conquests of the early part of the century. Just which two Thomas Campbell was thinking of is a more difficult problem. Poland, Egypt, and various other principalities might be included in the list of available interpretations. The "great earthquake" may have reference to the earthquake of Lisbon or to some other seismic disturbance of lesser significance. The "tenth part of the great city" which was thrown down will of course have to be harmonized with the interpretation of the earthquake. The anger of the nations requires no further elucidation as this was the time when the continent of Europe was convulsed by the warlike operations of the great Napoleon. Beyond any question, the obvious nearness of the Messianic age, as revealed by his interpretation of prophecy, in the light of current history had much to do with the author's optimism throughout the pages of the *Declaration and Address*.

It was true of those most familiar with the facts during the Napoleonic period, as it has been true of our own contemporaries during the days of the Great War, that America in both instances came to be regarded as a peculiarly fortunate land. Thomas Campbell rejoices in the Providence which has "graciously placed us at so great a distance from the awful convulsions and revolutions that have dashed and are dashing to pieces the nations like a potter's vessel." He sympathized fully with George Washington's policy of avoiding foreign entanglements and maintaining a splendid isolation with the protecting distance of the Atlantic Ocean to safeguard our national life. There is no note of sympathy with, or interest in, the European struggles. Evidently the author considers them as simply the fulfillment of prophecy and solely as notes of warning to the rest of

the world. Europe furnishes a dire example by which we should profit, but we should have no further concern in the matter. This was doubtless the prevailing and typical attitude of mind of American citizenship during the early years of the nineteenth century.

The message of the *Declaration and Address* is not only one of unity but also one of freedom. The author exhorts his readers to stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ has made his people free and not to be entangled again with the yoke of bondage. Here the Protestant note is struck along with the Catholic note of unity. The breaking down of sectarian barriers is not to be secured by the surrender of the dearly bought freedom of the reformation. Mr. Campbell wants unity but not unity at any price. He is willing to pay well for it but not too well. He will give up almost everything except liberty, but he stops short when the limit is reached. He sees clearly that the essential principle of Protestantism, the right of private judgment, must enter into any true or lasting program for Christian union.

The platform which is suggested in the *Declaration and Address* and which will be discussed in detail later, it will be observed, is essentially tentative. Thomas Campbell was sensitive in the extreme with regard to the assumption of leadership in a matter of such significance. Over and over again, he emphasizes his own unwillingness to be regarded as the leader of the new movement. "We by no means pretend to dictate," he says, and then goes on to call attention to the necessity for the contribution of the united talent of the church in order that the great project which he suggests may be carried out. All through the philosophy of the Campbells, there is a fundamental denial of Carlyle's doctrine that history is made up of the biographies of a few great personalities. It is the common voice of the collective reason which carries authority with it rather than the strident note of a single individual. Of course the Campbells believed in the value

of personality and the necessity for leadership, but there was nothing autocratic in their conception of either term. They had immense faith in democracy, in the rationality of the average mind and they believed that progress is made best by the slower movement which is involved in the consensus of many minds, than by the flashlight program of individual genius. As we have mentioned previously, this supreme confidence in the practical infallibility of the universal mind is the distinguishing characteristic of Thomas Campbell's philosophy. It is impossible to understand the logic of his position without recognizing this underlying principle.

It is both interesting and striking to note that the belief of the Campbells in the authority of the common mind is in reality the Protestant doctrine of infallibility as opposed to the Catholic doctrine of the inerrancy of the Vatican. Catholic Modernists, like Loisy and Tyrrell, claim that the Roman dogma means the same at bottom as the Protestant. In other words, the Vatican ought to represent the collective mind of the Church as a whole instead of the views of a small coterie or of a single individual, the Pope. Father Tyrrell, in his recently published Letters, expresses this interpretation again and again. The Pope, he says, is simply the spokesman of the united sentiment of the Church. Since this sentiment speaks the voice of the common mind of Catholic Christendom, it is as nearly infallible as is possible for human beings. We can ask for no greater degree of inerrancy. Tyrrell's view, it will be observed, is substantially the same as that of Thomas Campbell with the exception that the latter would not have approved of the Catholic form of expression. Still if the Vatican actually embodied the common mind of Christendom as a whole, the Campbells, no doubt, would have accepted its interpretations. Of course as Tyrrell is regretfully forced to admit, the Vatican does *not* even reflect the common mind of Catholic Christendom. The best proof of this fact is found in the excommunication

of the Modernists by papal decree. Tyrrell himself was not allowed to be buried in consecrated ground and his doctrines were put on the Index. Nevertheless, the striking confirmation of the underlying philosophy of the Campbells by the brilliant protagonists of Roman Catholic Modernism is exceedingly significant. If the Vatican should ever approach the doctrine of infallibility urged by Tyrrell and Loisy, it will come desperately close to furnishing a basis for union upon which all Christians can stand. Until it is willing to do this, there appears to the writer to be absolutely no hope for agreement.

If the Catholics have not yet accepted the doctrine of infallibility put forth in the *Declaration and Address*, the same thing may be said of the vast majority of Protestants. It is true that the real significance of the Campbells' position has, perhaps, never been understood by the overwhelming majority of those whom they hoped to reach. It is questionable, indeed, whether the full implications of these principles have been understood by the majority of those who have been their nominal advocates. Nevertheless, truth is truth, and nothing is more certain than the fact that the basic principle of the *Declaration* will some day become the acknowledged standard of a united Christendom. Only in this way can science and religion march hand in hand, something which must be true of the future history of both of them. The days of superstitious and autocratic authority are past. The days of the divinely rational authority are yet to come. Here and there, a few people, like Tyrrell and Loisy, recognize the significance of these things even in the very presence of the most autocratic imperialism. Others, under more favorable circumstances, are rapidly coming to see the same thing. When the vision becomes more perfect and more universal the barriers of sectarianism will fall, and the goal which the *Declaration and Address* proposes will be achieved.

## VIII. THE PLATFORM FOR UNITY

**Proposition One, The Church Defined**

Having said so much to solicit attention and prevent mistakes, we submit as follows:

**PROPOSITION 1.** That the Church of Christ upon earth is essentially, intentionally, and constitutionally one; consisting of all those in every place that profess their faith in Christ and obedience to Him in all things according to the Scriptures, and that manifest the same by their tempers and conduct, and of none else; as none else can be truly and properly called Christians.

Proposition One of the Declaration contains its most important statement and may be regarded as the keynote of the position taken by its author. It asserts the necessary unity of the Church of Christ and also defines who are and who are not Christians.

There is perhaps no statement in the whole round of Christian union literature which is more justly famous than the declaration of Thomas Campbell, "that the Church of Christ upon earth is essentially, intentionally, and constitutionally one." It ranks along with Chillingworth's maxim, "the Bible and the Bible alone is the religion of Protestants," and the still more famous word of Meldenius, "in things essential, unity; in non-essentials, liberty; in all things, charity." The emphatic and comprehensive character of Mr. Campbell's definition is indicated by the three adverbs which he uses. The word "essentially" carries with it the idea that unity is no extraneous or insignificant feature of the Church but that it belongs to the very essence, as the Scholastics used to put it, of the concept. In other words, a divided Church is a contradiction in itself. The only true Church of Christ must be a united Church. The very structure, the underlying substance, as it were, of the whole Church idea requires unity. The denominational theory of the Church is therefore erroneous and without foundation. At this point, Thomas Campbell is at one with the High Church interpretation which makes unity,

along with catholicity, holiness, and apostolicity, one of the essential marks of the Christian ecclesia.

In asserting the "intentional" feature in the unity of the Church, Thomas Campbell brings in the element of purpose quite in harmony with his Presbyterian forbears. Church unity did not grow up of itself nor is it to be regarded as a product of natural selection in the religious world. The Church, in other words, possesses a divine norm, or standard, which was deliberately given it by its Author and which, for this very reason, cannot be improved upon. Unity is one of the distinguishing characteristics of the divine plan for the Church. Schism is a sin and doubtless one of the greatest sins which a follower of Christ can commit. To destroy the unity of the Church means to destroy its essential program and plan for the salvation of the world. Any one who does this deliberately is using his energies to thwart the very purpose for which Jesus came into the world and for which he gave up his life on the cross. Christian unity, because it is "intentional" and not accidental or casual, places a supreme obligation for its realization upon Christians of all parties and classes.

The idea involved in the word "constitutionally" is structural or political rather than metaphysical or mystical. The underlying philosophy involved in Christian union is brought out in the word "essentially." The mystical and sacramental feature is embodied in the word "intentional," and the political and organizational elements in the word "constitutional." The Church of Christ has a constitution, a definite structure, an organization which it must maintain in the world. It belongs to the very warp and woof of the organization that it should be unitary. The ideal of a federation of churches, for example, violates the "constitutional" unity of the body of Christ. There is no place in the political framework of the ecclesia for separate denom-

inations or sects. The Church is a seamless robe and not a Joseph's coat of many colored patches.

Thomas Campbell's definition of a Christian will hardly be contested even by those who may refuse to accept its practical implications. It stresses the ethical note and makes character a test of faith. There is some ambiguity in the expression "obedience to him in all things according to the Scriptures," but it should be remembered that it is the "tempers and conduct" of the individuals in question which determine the reality of their obedience. It is interesting, in this connection, to note that the author of the *Declaration* does not, along with Augustine and Calvin, make the criterion of election fundamental in defining the Church, nor does he, along with Cyprian or Aquinas, make baptism the dividing mark, but rather assigns to character and conduct the place which so many theologians have given to election and baptism. At this point he is more of a Socinian than he is a Catholic or a Calvinist. At the same time, it is to be noted, that he makes a profession of faith in Christ and open obedience to him essentials. This means, of course, church membership of some kind or other. To belong to the Church is, therefore, necessary in order to be a Christian, but even if you are a church member and fail to manifest your faith by your temper and conduct, you cannot be truly and properly called a Christian. There is in all this the stern moral background which was characteristic of so many of the independent churches of the Reformation.

### **Proposition Two, The Province of the Local Congregation**

PROPOSITION 2. That although the Church of Christ upon earth must necessarily exist in particular and distinct societies, locally separate one from another, yet there ought to be no schisms, no uncharitable divisions among them. They ought to receive each other as Christ Jesus hath also received them, to the glory of God. And for this purpose, they ought all to walk by the

same rule, to mind and speak the same thing; and to be perfectly joined together in the same mind, and in the same judgment.

This proposition must be understood in connection with Proposition One. Although there is only one Church of Christ, there are of necessity many local churches or congregations. These groups are to be united, not through any ecclesiastical overlordship but in the common bond of brotherhood and love. The congregations are "to receive each other as Christ Jesus has received them, to the glory of God." This, of course, involves a great deal more fraternity than exists today in the nominally Christian world. The fact that Thomas Campbell did not contemplate a mere unity of sentiment or of practical co-operation is clearly indicated by his reference "to minding and speaking the same thing," and to the necessity "for being perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment." When Christian union comes, it will have a definite basis of rational agreement upon essentials and will not be a mere co-operation in various forms of service.

### **Proposition Three, The Authority of the Scriptures**

PROPOSITION 3. That in order to do this nothing ought to be inculcated upon Christians as articles of faith; nor required of them as terms of communion, but what is expressly taught and enjoined upon them in the word of God. Nor ought anything to be admitted, as of divine obligation, in their church constitution and managements but what is expressly enjoined by the authority of our Lord Jesus Christ and his Apostles upon the New Testament church; either in express terms or by approved precedent.

In this famous passage, Mr. Campbell lays down his fundamental doctrine that the Scriptures as the Word of God constitute the only authority for the Church. This was of course the fundamental Protestant position, from Luther's time on down, but it was modified by creedal statements, in almost all Protestant churches, to such an extent as to be practically nullified. Lutherans looked toward the *Augsburg Confession* and *Luther's*



*Shorter Catechism* for practical guidance in religious matters more than they did toward the Bible itself. The same thing was true of the Calvinists and the Westminster formulation. Every denomination had its own creed, its own catechism, and usually its own prayer book or other devotional literature. All of these "rules of faith" claimed to be based upon the Scriptures and yet all of them disagreed in such fashion as hopelessly to divide their adherents. Thomas Campbell wished to brush away all of these man-made causes of schism, believing that if Protestants, at least, could all get back to the Bible and the Bible alone they would once more be united. We recognize today that this belief was perhaps too sanguine. Nevertheless, it is quite true that there can be no hope of unity so long as denominations hold fast to their confessions, creeds, and rituals which date after the post-apostolic period. We may not be able to get together on the New Testament, but it is quite certain that we shall never get together on any creed or confession of purely human formulation.

#### **Proposition Four, Proper Place of the New and the Old Testament**

PROPOSITION 4. That although the Scriptures of the Old and the New Testament are inseparably connected, making together but one perfect and entire revelation of the Divine will, for the edification and salvation of the church; and therefore in that respect cannot be separated; yet as to what directly and properly belongs to their immediate object, the New Testament is as perfect a constitution for the worship, discipline, and government of the New Testament church, and as perfect a rule for the particular duties of its members, as the Old Testament was for the worship, discipline and government of the Old Testament church and the particular duties of its members.

The doctrine of the complete authority and inspiration of both the Old and the New Testament is quite definitely asserted in this proposition. Nevertheless the author clearly indicates that the Old Testament has nothing whatever to do with the worship, discipline and

government of the Church of Christ. Alexander Campbell emphasized this distinction still more fully in his famous Sermon on the Law. Both father and son were in advance of their age and the heresy of the latter at this point practically led to his excommunication by the Redstone Baptist Association of which he was at that time a member. It seems peculiar today that a century ago Protestant Christians should almost universally have regarded the Old Testament as verbally authoritative for Christians, but such was the case. Of course the progress of modern criticism has made the Campbells' position thoroughly conservative in the light of present day knowledge. It should not be forgotten, however, that it was anything but conservative at the time when it was promulgated.

### **Proposition Five, The New Testament Ordinances**

PROPOSITION 5. That with respect to the commands and ordinances of our Lord Jesus Christ, where the Scriptures are silent, as to the express time or manner of performance, if any such there be; no human authority has power to interfere, in order to supply the supposed deficiency, by making laws for the church; nor can anything more be required of Christians in such cases, but only that they *so* observe these commands and ordinances, as will evidently answer the declared and obvious end of their institution. Much less has any human authority power to impose new commands or ordinances upon the church, which our Lord Jesus Christ has not enjoined. Nothing ought to be received into the faith or worship of the church; or be made a term of communion among Christians, that is not as old as the New Testament.

This section is somewhat awkwardly constructed and may seem, at first sight, to be an attempt to limit the power of the Holy Spirit in the interest of a narrow legalism. The purpose of the author, however, is not one of constraint but of freedom. He is trying to emphasize the fact that where there is no express word of authority in the New Testament for church forms or ordinances, the individual Christian is left free to observe them as he may deem proper. Any attempt to curb his freedom in this particular is a violation of the

spirit of the New Testament and should be condemned. The real point to the paragraph is found in the last sentence which asserts that nothing should be made a matter of faith or a test of communion amongst Christians which is not as old as the New Testament. Here again Mr. Campbell sweeps away, at one stroke, the whole structure of post apostolic dogma.

### Proposition Six, The Proper Place of Theology

PROPOSITION 6. That although inferences and deductions from scripture premises, when fairly inferred, may be truly called the doctrine of God's holy word: yet are they not formally binding upon the consciences of Christians farther than they perceive the connection, and evidently see that they are so; for their faith must not stand in the wisdom of men; but in the power and veracity of God—therefore no such deductions can be made terms of communion, but do properly belong to the after and progressive edification of the church. Hence it is evident that no such deductions or inferential truths ought to have any place in the church's confession.

This is one of the most important sections of the *Declaration*. It teaches the place and value of theology in the Christian economy and also emphasizes the progressive character of the Church. Theology, as Mr. Campbell sees clearly, can never be made authoritative for the reason that it is progressive in its nature and by the very law of its growth must be constantly getting out of date. Nevertheless theology is useful because it involves progress in thought and in the higher intellectual life of the Christian. Thomas Campbell was too much of a scholar to decry the value of scholastic investigation. He believed in theology but he did not believe in making its conclusions a test of fellowship among Christians. He believed in the progressive nature and character of the Church, but also believed that in the New Testament Scriptures we have an ideal which can never be outgrown.

### Proposition Seven, The Futility of Human Creeds

PROPOSITION 7. That although doctrinal exhibitions of the great system of divine truths, and defensive testimonies in opposition to prevailing errors, be highly expedient; and the more full and explicit they be, for those purposes, the better; yet as these must be in a great measure the effect of human reasoning, and of course must contain many inferential truths, they ought not to be made terms of Christian communion: unless we suppose, what is contrary to fact, that none have a right to the communion of the church, but such as possess a very clear and decisive judgment; or are come to a very high degree of doctrinal information; whereas the church from the beginning did, and ever will, consist of little children and young men, as well as fathers.

Proposition Seven is only a continuation and extension of the principal idea contained in Proposition Six. It emphasizes the uselessness of creedal standards as tests of fellowship by calling attention to the fact that the Church has always been made up of people who could not understand highly technical statements and therefore could not be included in the group if such standards were set up. Of course this consideration is acknowledged today by the churches which possess elaborate doctrinal symbols in their distinction between the ministry and the laity. In other words, the minister alone is supposed to understand and subscribe to the creed. A much simpler statement of faith is sufficient for church membership. Bishop Gore, in his advocacy of the Nicene formula as the creedal basis for the United Church, at the Geneva meeting of 1920, made this distinction very clear. He wanted all of the ministry to pledge allegiance to the Athanasian view of the Trinity, but did not wish to require such a pledge from the church membership as a whole. The justification of this position lies in the belief that if you can control the thought leaders of a movement it is easy to control their followers. Nevertheless there is a certain absurdity in permitting one class of people to become Christians upon a thought basis differing from that of another class. It is nowhere said in the New Testament that

the apostles should believe anything not required of their followers. There is one creed for all Christians alike so far as the apostolic order is concerned.

There can be no question but that the attitude assumed toward human creeds in the *Declaration and Address* is somewhat more generous and tolerant than was the later position of Alexander Campbell. In the superb polemic against man-made standards of faith contained in the debate with Rice, the younger Campbell is much more vigorous in his opposition than was true of his father four decades earlier. Doubtless controversy had helped to steel the convictions of both the reformers and especially of the one in the forefront of the conflict. The fact remains, however, that there is no position in the entire program of the Restoration which is more rapidly gaining in popular favor than its attitude upon dogmatic creeds.

### **Proposition Eight, Terms of Admission to the Church**

PROPOSITION 8. That as it is not necessary that persons should have a particular knowledge or distinct apprehension of all divinely revealed truths in order to entitle them to a place in the Church; neither should they, for this purpose, be required to make a profession more extensive than their knowledge; but that, on the contrary, their having a due measure of Scriptural self-knowledge respecting their lost and perishing condition by nature and practice, and of the way of salvation through Jesus Christ, accompanied with a profession of their faith in and obedience to him, in all things, according to his word, is all that is absolutely necessary to qualify them for admission into his Church.

If it is not necessary for one to know everything about religion in order to become a member of the Church, it is obviously clear that he ought not to be required, as Thomas Campbell says, "to make a profession more extensive than his knowledge." The essential things involved in the idea of church fellowship are:

- (1) The consciousness of sin.
- (2) The acceptance of salvation through Jesus Christ.
- (3) Willing obedience and open profession of faith in harmony with the teaching of God's word.

These three considerations have always been accepted as basic and fundamental by church leaders of all parties. Repentance, faith, and obedience represent salvation at its lowest terms. Upon this question, the author of the *Declaration and Address* is at one with the universal judgment of Christendom.

There is one statement in proposition eight which indicates the adherence of Thomas Campbell to a dogma which he afterwards gave up. We refer to the doctrine of original sin. He speaks of the "lost and perishing condition" of those who are sinners "by nature and practice." The words "nature" and "practice" can hardly be understood otherwise than in the usual theological distinction between "original" and "positive" sin. Later on, Thomas Campbell was brought to see that "original sin" involved a moral contradiction and, therefore, surrendered it along with the practice of infant baptism.

### **Proposition Nine, The Brotherhood of the Church**

PROPOSITION 9. That all that are enabled through grace to make such a profession, and to manifest the reality of it in their tempers and conduct, should consider each other as the precious saints of God, should love each other as brethren, children of the same family and Father, temples of the same Spirit, members of the same body, subjects of the same grace, objects of the same Divine love, bought with the same price, and joint-heirs of the same inheritance. Whom God hath thus joined together no man should dare to put asunder.

The essential brotherhood of the church or, as the old reformers put it, of "the elect" has always been very orthodox in theory if not in practical observance. As to the apostolicity of the doctrine, there can be no question. If the Early Church was anything at all, it was a brotherhood. The supreme test of loyalty in the martyr days was the embodiment of this principle. Tertullian says that the heathen could not understand the single hearted devotion of Christians to each other and kept exclaiming in amazement "See how these Chris-

tians love one another!" Of course the apostolic injunction, "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples if ye have love one to another" lay back of this practice. There was nothing about the anarchic and discordant situation, in which Thomas Campbell saw the Christians about him plunged, which so disturbed him as the universal disregard of this fundamental principle. He rightly saw that the very heart of the Christian religion is involved in the problem. Christians who do not love each other are not Christians in the true sense of the word, and any system of church relations which fails to foster the spirit of brotherhood must have something radically wrong about it. The followers of Christ constitute the great family of the faithful. This family must be held together by the ties of love and devotion. Assuredly, this is the most elementary consideration in any true view of the nature and character of the Church of Christ.

In proposition nine, again, we have an echo of the Calvinistic theology to which Mr. Campbell adhered. It is only those "that are enabled through grace" to make a profession of their faith who have a place in the company of the elect. It is true that the test of their calling is to be found "in their tempers and conduct," but this fact does not interfere with the predestinarian dogma. No doubt, the author's consciousness of the evil of disunion was all the more poignant because he believed in the doctrine of election. It seemed inconceivable to him that those who had been foreordained by the grace of God to eternal salvation should be so unappreciative of this grace and of their own high calling as to be unwilling to live on terms of brotherhood with each other.

### **Proposition Ten, The Sin of Church Divisions**

PROPOSITION 10. That division among the Christians is a horrid evil, fraught with many evils. It is antiChristian, as it destroys the visible unity of the body of Christ; as if he were

divided against himself, excluding and excommunicating a part of himself. It is antisciptural, as being strictly prohibited by his sovereign authority; a direct violation of his express command. It is antinatural, as it excites Christians to contemn, to hate, and oppose one another, who are bound by the highest and most endearing obligations to love each other as brethren, even as Christ has loved them. In a word, it is productive of confusion and of every evil work.

The curse of schism has never been emphasized in stronger or more emphatic language than it is in the above paragraph. It is denounced (1) as anti-Christian, (2) as antisciptural, and (3) as antinatural. It is anti-Christian because the Church, in itself, constitutes the body of Christ. Division in the Church, therefore, means division in Christ's own body, something which seemed peculiarly abhorrent to the reverential temper of Thomas Campbell. The Hegelian Absolute had not yet been proclaimed when the *Declaration and Address* was written. Moreover, it is doubtful whether either of the Campbells took much interest in it when it was finally launched upon the philosophical world. Those who accepted the idea, however, would not have felt disturbed over the schism in the body of the Church. If God, or the Absolute, includes everything there is within himself, he surely includes all kinds of schisms. If this is true of the Absolute, in a smaller way it may be true of the second person of the Trinity. Of course to those who, like the writer, do not accept the Absolute position in any form, Thomas Campbell's arguments still hold good. A church made up of warring fragments is as useless and as contradictory as is a deity molded after the same fashion.

The antisciptural nature of this union is easily made out. Aside from the direct reference in the seventeenth chapter of the Gospel of John, the universal tenor of Christ's teaching is against schism. There is no scriptural authority for church divisions on the basis of any sound critical exegesis. It is true that in the older days extreme denominationalists occasionally sought out iso-



lated texts which might be twisted into an endorsement of separatism. Even this unfortunate practice has now largely fallen into disuse. There are few principles more widely or universally accepted nowadays by Christians of all classes than the fact that the scriptures teach the fundamental unity of the church.

The antinatural character of disunion appears as the climax of the argument. Church divisions cause Christians to sink lower in the scale than those who are deprived of the privileges of religion. It is unfortunately true that hatred, jealousy, and strife are often manifested in their most extreme forms by professing Christians. The lack of unity which characterizes the followers of Jesus is largely responsible for this situation. Thomas Campbell is not guilty of exaggeration when he speaks of disunion as "a horrid evil" and accuses it of being "productive of confusion and of every evil work."

### Proposition Eleven, Causes of Divisions

PROPOSITION 11. That (in some instances) a partial neglect of the expressly revealed will of God, and (in others) an assumed authority for making the approbation of human opinions and human inventions a term of communion, by introducing them into the constitution, faith, or worship of the Church, are, and have been, the immediate, obvious, and universally acknowledged causes, of all the corruptions and divisions that ever have taken place in the Church of God.

It may be questioned whether the language used in proposition eleven is entirely free from exaggeration. No doubt to Thomas Campbell's mind the chief and, in fact so far as he could see, the only real causes of division are as he has scheduled them. In the light of the past hundred years' history, however, we are coming to see that disunion is a much more complex affair than would at first sight appear. Beyond any question, the reasons assigned by the author of the *Declaration and Address* for the prevailing lack of unity in the Church largely hold good today. Nevertheless, it would seem

that they are not sufficiently inclusive to explain the entire situation. Let us note briefly what these causes are as they are given in proposition eleven.

The first cause of disunion, we are told, is "a partial neglect of the expressly revealed will of God." Of course, this statement, doubtless, holds good in certain instances. We think it only fair to say, however, that disagreements between Christians frequently arise when all parties concerned are trying to obey the will of God as they see it. For reasons which Mr. Campbell himself has mentioned, even good people do not always interpret "the revealed will of God" in the same way. So long as there are different interpretations, there will be divisions. These can only be removed when all those who are involved in them come to recognize the fallibility of their own judgments and the possibility of error on the part of any or all of them.

The second reason for division is the introduction "into the constitution, faith, or worship of the church" of "human opinions and human inventions." No doubt this cause is and has been largely operative throughout the course of church history. It seems rather extreme, however, to speak of this item in conjunction with the one mentioned above as constituting "the immediate, obvious and universally acknowledged causes of all the corruptions and divisions that ever have taken place in the church of God." We question whether Mr. Campbell, if he were alive today and were rewriting his platform, would use precisely the same language in Proposition Eleven which he used in 1809.

### **Proposition Twelve, Terms of Church Membership**

PROPOSITION 12. That all that is necessary to the highest state of perfection and purity of the Church upon earth is, first, that none be received as members but such as having that due measure of scriptural self-knowledge described above, do profess their faith in Christ and obedience to him in all things according to the Scriptures; nor, secondly, that any be retained in her communion longer than they continue to manifest the reality of their

profession by their temper and conduct. Thirdly, that her ministers, duly and scripturally qualified, inculcate none other things than those very articles of faith and holiness expressly revealed and enjoined in the word of God. Lastly, that in all their administrations they keep close by the observance of all divine ordinances, after the example of the primitive Church, exhibited in the New Testament; without any additions whatsoever of human opinions or inventions of men.

Proposition twelve contains the summary of the church program outlined in the *Declaration and Address*. It will be observed that there are four features mentioned in the outline.

(1) That only professed believers who acknowledge the authority of the Scriptures should be received into church membership.

(2) That only those who live a Christian life shall be retained in the church fellowship.

(3) That the ministry which is to be scripturally qualified is to preach nothing except that which is expressly enjoined in the word of God.

(4) That the Church ordinances and ritual shall be observed as in the apostolic days.

Of these four considerations, only the first and the last were retained in the practice of the Restoration Movement, at least in the sense in which they are here used. The second consideration, in modified form, has force today but certainly not in the rigid sense in which Thomas Campbell intended it. As for the third item, there are no limits imposed upon the ministers who preach for the Disciples of Christ aside from such considerations of honesty and decency as may be necessary in order to secure a hearing.

### Proposition Thirteen, The Place of Expediency

PROPOSITION 13. Lastly. That if any circumstantial indispensable necessary to the observance of divine ordinances be not found upon the page of express revelation, such, and such only, as are absolutely necessary for this purpose should be adopted under the title of human expedients, without any pretense to a more sacred origin, so that any subsequent alteration or difference in the observance of these things might produce no contention nor division in the Church.

Proposition thirteen opens the way for human expedients in promoting the work of the Church. It will be observed that Mr. Campbell is decidedly hesitant about the admissions which he makes. He is so conscious of the part which purely human considerations have played in promoting church divisions that he does not wish to open the door to further dangers. Nevertheless, he is not quite ready to admit that every demand of the modern age in the field of religion is specifically met in the sacred writings. He safeguards his doctrine of expedients, it will be observed, by a full recognition of their fallible origin and by permitting full opportunity for amendment or alteration if such should be needed.

## IX. TEXT OF THE DECLARATION—METHOD AND PURPOSE OF THE PLATFORM

From the nature and construction of these propositions, it will evidently appear, that they are laid in a designed subserviency to the declared end of our association; and are exhibited for the express purpose of performing a duty of previous necessity, a duty loudly called for in existing circumstances at the hand of every one that would desire to promote the interests of Zion; a duty not only enjoined, as has been already observed from Isa. 52:14, but which is also there predicted of the faithful remnant as a thing in which they would voluntarily engage. "He that putteth his trust in me shall possess the land, and shall inherit my holy mountain; and shall say, Cast ye up cast ye up, prepare the way; take up the stumbling-block out of the way of my people."

To prepare the way for a permanent Scriptural unity among Christians, by calling up to their consideration fundamental truths, directing their attention to first principles, clearing the way before them by removing the stumbling-blocks—the rubbish of ages, which has been thrown upon it, and fencing it on each side, that in advancing toward the desired object they may not miss the way through mistake or inadvertency, by turning aside to the right hand or to the left, is, at least, the sincere intention of the above propositions.

It remains with our brethren now to say, how far they go toward answering this intention. Do they exhibit truths demonstrably evident in the light of Scripture and right reason, so that

to deny any part of them the contrary assertion would be manifestly absurd and inadmissible? Considered as a preliminary for the above purpose, are they adequate, so that if acted upon, they would infallibly lead to the desired unity, and secure it when in either of these respects, let them be corrected and amended, till they become sufficiently evident, adequate, and unexceptionable. In the meantime, let them be examined with rigor, with all the rigor that justice, candor, and charity will admit.

### The Multitude no Authority

If we have mistaken the way, we shall be glad to be set right; but if, in the meantime, we have been happily led to suggest obvious and undeniable truths, which, if adopted and acted upon, would infallibly lead to the desired unity, and secure it when obtained, we hope it will be no objection that they have not proceeded from a General Council. It is not the voice of the multitude, but the voice of truth, that has power with the conscience; that can produce rational conviction and acceptable obedience. A conscience that awaits the decision of the multitude, that hangs in suspense for the casting vote of the majority, is a fit subject for the man of sin. This, we are persuaded, is the uniform sentiment of real Christians of every denomination. Would to God that all professors were such, then should our eyes soon behold the prosperity of Zion; we should soon see Jerusalem a quiet habitation.

### The Motto of the Restoration

Union in truth has been, and ever must be, the desire and prayer of all such; Union in Truth is our motto. The Divine word is our standard; in the Lord's name do we display our banners. Our eyes are upon the promises, "So shall they fear the name of the Lord from the west, and his glory from the rising of the sun." "When the enemy shall come in like a flood, the Spirit of the Lord shall lift up a standard against him." Our humble desire is to be *his* standard bearers, to fight under *his* banner, and with *his* weapons," which are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds; "even all of these strongholds of division, those partition walls of separation which, like the walls of Jerico, have been built up, as it were, to the very heavens, to separate God's people, to divide his flock and so to prevent them from entering into their promised rest, at least in so far as it respects this world.

An enemy hath done this, but he shall not finally prevail; "for the meek shall inherit the earth, and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace." "And the kingdom and dominion,

even the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people of the saints of the Most High, and they shall possess it forever." But this can not be in their present broken and divided state; "for a kingdom or a house divided against itself cannot stand; but cometh to desolation." Now this has been the case with the Church for a long time. However, "the Lord will not cast off his people, neither will he forsake his heritage; but judgement shall return unto righteousness, and all the upright in heart shall follow it." To all such, and such alone, are our expectations directed. Come, then, ye blessed of the Lord, we have your prayers, let us also have your actual assistance. What, shall we pray for a thing and not strive to obtain it!

### Exhortation to Action

We call, we invite you again, by every consideration in these premises. You that are near, associate with us; you that are at too great a distance, associate as we have done. Let not the paucity of your number in any given district, prove an insuperable discouragement. Remember Him that has said, "If two of you shall agree on earth as touching anything that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father who is in heaven; for where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." With such a promise as this, for the attainment of every possible and promised good, there is no room for discouragement.

Come on then, "ye that fear the Lord; keep not silence, and give him no rest till he make Jerusalem a joy and a praise in the earth." Put on that noble resolution dictated by the prophet, saying, "For Zion's sake will we not hold our peace, and for Jerusalem's sake we will not rest, until the righteousness thereof go forth as brightness, and the salvation thereof as a lamp that burneth."

### The Associational Plan

Thus impressed, you will find means to associate, at such convenient distances, as to meet at least once a month; to beseech the Lord to put an end to our lamentable divisions; to heal and unite his people, that his Church may resume her original constitutional unity and purity, and thus be exalted to the enjoyment of her promised prosperity, that the Jews may be speedily converted, and the fullness of the Gentiles brought in. Thus associated, you will be in a capacity to investigate the evil causes of our sad divisions; to consider and bewail their pernicious effects; and to mourn over them before the Lord—who hath said: "I

will go and return to my place, till they acknowledge their offense and seek my face.”

Alas! then, what reasonable prospect can we have of being delivered from those sad calamities, which have so long afflicted the Church of God; while a party spirit, instead of bewailing, is everywhere justifying, the bitter principle of these pernicious evils; by insisting upon the right of rejecting those, however unexceptionable in other respects, who cannot see with them in matters of private opinion, of human inference, that are nowhere expressly revealed or enjoined in the word of God. Thus associated, will the friends of peace, the advocates for Christian unity, be in a capacity to connect in larger circles, where several of those smaller societies may meet semi-annually at a convenient centre; and thus avail themselves of their combined exertions for promoting the interests of the common cause. We hope that many of the Lord's ministers in all places will volunteer in this service, forasmuch as they know it is his favorite work, the very desire of his soul.

## X. COMMENT UPON THE ABOVE

THE *Declaration and Address* was not regarded by its author as a fixed or infallible platform for Christian Union. On the contrary, it was primarily intended to clear the way for some more hopeful program than the religious outlook presented when it was written. Mr. Campbell says that the sincere intention of his propositions is simply “to prepare the way for a permanent scriptural unity amongst Christians by calling up to their consideration fundamental truths, directing their attention to first principles, clearing the way before them by removing the stumbling blocks—the rubbish of ages which has been thrown upon it.”

There is nothing in all this to indicate that the author wished to assume any air of infallibility or inerrancy. He makes his appeal simply to the common sense, or as he calls it “the right reason,” of Christians everywhere and asserts his entire willingness to adopt some other program if his own tentative suggestions should not be able to stand the test. At best, he regards his platform as only “preliminary” and covets discussion and criti-

cism. He says that if his work is defective either from the point of view of its adequacy or its complete rationality that it should be "corrected and amended" until it becomes "sufficiently evident, adequate and unexceptionable." In all this there is the manifestation of that scientific temper which has always characterized the Disciple movement at its best.

Restoration advocates have doubtless understressed the mystical element in religion, but there is no Church in Christendom which in its fundamental genius and character is more closely allied to the scientific spirit. It is this fact which, in the judgment of the writer, gives the greatest promise for its future. The scientific materialists, on the one side, and the dogmatic traditionalists, on the other, both have their faces set toward destruction. The religion which both the present and the future demands must be one which in the spirit of the real scientist seeks the truth hand in hand with honest investigation, to the end that humanity may find the perfect freedom of the sons of God. Thomas Campbell manifests precisely this spirit when he asks that his program shall be examined with rigor, "with all the rigor that justice, candor and charity will admit."

The question of authority comes up again in the rather ironical reference to the idea that his propositions should not be discounted because "they have not proceeded from a General Council." According to the old Catholic view, infallibility rested with the decisions of the General Councils. Later this doctrine was somewhat modified, at least in practice, by the inclusion of the Pope as a sharer in the burden of infallibility. By the decrees of the Vatican council of the last century, infallibility was vested in the Pope alone so that there would appear to be no more necessity for the Roman Church to call a General Council, unless such action should be taken as a matter of expediency on the part of the Vatican itself.



Thomas Campbell, in the spirit of the Reformation, appeals from the ecclesiastical decisions of popes and cardinals to what he considers the more certain infallibility of the common mind as the latter is found embodied in the Christian thought of the church membership as a whole. Truth is truth with him whether it proceeds from a council or from a parish priest. Moreover, the only test of truth is its universal acceptance by right thinking people everywhere. In taking this position, he is not asserting the infallibility of numbers. He says very distinctly "it is not the voice of the multitude, but the voice of truth that can produce rational conviction and acceptable obedience." The common mind, the universal reason, is not always incarnate in the prejudiced and turbulent mass of humanity. It is, however, always present in the thoughtful consensus of the majority of intelligent, candid, and honest seekers after truth. These are the people whom Mr. Campbell styles "real Christians of every denomination." He is perfectly willing to submit his case to this sort of jury. He submits it with all the more confidence because he feels assured that truth has no ground for fearing such a test and it is truth alone which he seeks.

At bottom, it may be said that there is not, after all, very much difference between this idea of authority and the theory which vests infallibility in a General Council. A General Council ought to be made up of just the type of people to whom Thomas Campbell is making his appeal. Were this the truth, no objection could be taken to the Council. Unfortunately, however, as so many honest Catholics themselves have admitted, candid seekers after truth are the last people who gain admission to the ecclesiastical tribunals. The voice of "right reason" must be sought for elsewhere. It is this voice to which the author of the *Declaration and Address* appeals. "Union in Truth," he says, is his motto. Moreover, he broadcasts this motto "In the Lord's Name." This attitude is far removed from the idea of compro-

mise which, as we have noted elsewhere, is vaguely hinted as a possible ground of union in an earlier section of *The Declaration*.

After all, Thomas Campbell's motto remains about the last word on the subject. Any union not founded upon truth must obviously come to naught. Moreover, the only way to discover truth is by that frank and candid appeal to the common reason which theologians, like Mr. Campbell, and scientists, like Newton and Kelvin, have always regarded as the ultimate touchstone. In a somewhat blundering sort of fashion, the ecclesiastical leaders of the world are slowly heading toward the same position. The proposed World Conference on Faith and Order and other similar gatherings represent efforts in this direction. The value of such gatherings lies in their educational emphasis. The only way to bring the common mind of Christians to bear directly upon the great issues involved in the problem of Christian union is by gradual educational enlightenment. The process is slow and laborious but it is the only course which promises permanent results. The unity of the Scriptures and the unity which Thomas Campbell advocated is one based upon the bedrock of truth as discerned and recognized by the right reason of Christians of all lands and in all parties.

The latter part of *The Declaration* reads a great deal like a sermon. We usually think of the Campbells as reserved and without especial emotional appeal. Alexander Campbell himself rarely made a gesture while speaking and depended almost entirely upon his superb command of language and thought in order to secure the results he desired. The concluding sections of the *Declaration and Address*, however, possess the quality of an exhortation. Thomas Campbell appeals, exhorts, quotes Scripture, beseeches, does in fact everything that Wesley or Whitefield might have been supposed to do under similar circumstances. He invites those who are near to join the Washington County Association and

those who are farther off to organize similar associations of their own. These organizations are to meet monthly in order to pray and to plan for Christian union.

Looking at the situation today, after the lapse of a century, we are constrained to say that these invitations and exhortations deserved better success than they achieved. Very few people joined the Washington County Association and practically no other associations were ever organized. Far-reaching as the *Declaration and Address* has proved in its later influence, it fell almost unheeded upon the religious life of its day. People did not take the trouble to criticize it or oppose it for the simple reason that nobody read it. This, however, has been the lot of some of the greatest books in the world, Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*, the Magna Charta of modern philosophy, among the rest of them. Works which are ephemerally popular are soon forgotten. Works that are too thoughtful and significant to catch the popular eye live on. The *Declaration and Address* still lives.

One wonders whether the plan suggested in the *Declaration and Address* might not still be a worth while suggestion for the Christian world. If "our brethren of all denominations would meet at least once a month to beseech the Lord to put an end to our lamentable divisions, to heal and unite his people, that his church may resume her original constitutional unity and purity" it might be a good thing. Such meetings would probably do more good than a host of ecclesiastical conferences on the part of the "higher ups." Christian union, when it comes, must come from the bottom and not from the top. Thomas Campbell proposed to start in the right way, that is with the local group. It has long been the opinion of the writer that the rank and file of most of the Protestant denominations would welcome this sort of getting together if their leaders would consent to them. Such simplicity, however, does not appeal to the

ecclesiastical mind. Only "duly accredited" officers of distinction, bishops, or other dignitaries dare meet together to confer about unity. If the common folk were to get together, something might happen. There is no danger that anything will ever happen with the ecclesiastics. There are too many fences to be kept intact, too many offices to be safeguarded, too many jealousies and prejudices that dare not be dropped. The common people would think of none of these things and would, therefore, be in a position to unite, but the common people never get together. Thomas Campbell appealed to the clergy. He knew that he had to reach the lay mind through them. We know that, too, as the result of much experience, and we also know that Thomas Campbell's appeal has been largely in vain.

All through the *Declaration and Address* there is a splendid commingling of the two principles of freedom and unity which represent the two hemispheres of a real catholic Christianity. The author pleads for freedom "in matters of private opinion" and "of human inference" at all times. He does emphasize the absolute authority of the divine word but he also admits the principle of human reason as its only interpreter. In all matters where the universal reason does not agree and thereby secure unanimity, he is sure that freedom is required and must be given. Upon this platform there would seem to be no reason why unity should not be achieved. Upon essentials, right reason will always give unanimity. Where such reason fails to secure agreement, it is obvious that we are dealing with non-essentials. In the nature of the case, therefore, there ought to be no insuperable obstacle in the way to union. Theoretically, there is none. Practically, as we have discovered by sad experience, the obstacles are innumerable. Satan hindered Paul when he wanted to visit the Church at Thessalonica in order to unify and encourage their work. Satan still hinders the process of unification and encouragement.

There is something about the very insistency of Thomas Campbell's appeal to the clergy which causes one to feel that he was not altogether sure of his confidence in them. Some of the expressions are so strong as almost to appear ironical. Of course there is not the slightest ground for believing that there is even a touch of sarcasm in the words. Certainly there could have been no such thing in the mind of the author. It is a peculiar commentary upon the failure of Christ's ministers in the all-important matter of promoting union that we can scarcely read these words today without giving them an ironical emphasis.

## XI. TEXT OF THE DECLARATION

*Earnest Appeal to the Clergy.*—Ye lovers of Jesus, and beloved of him, however scattered in this cloudy and dark day, ye love the truth as it is in Jesus; (if our hearts deceive us not) so do we. Ye desire union in Christ, with all them that love him; so do we. Ye lament and bewail our divisions; so do we. Ye reject the doctrines and commandments of men that ye may keep the law of Christ; so do we. Ye believe the alone sufficiency of his word; so do we. Ye believe that the word itself ought to be our rule and not any human explication of it; so do we. Ye believe that no man has a right to judge, to exclude, or reject, his professing Christian brother; except in so far as he stands condemned, or rejected, by the express letter of the law; so do we. Ye believe that the greatest fundamental law of unity and love ought not to be violated to make way for exalting human opinions to an equality with express revelation, by making them articles of faith and terms of communion; so do we. Ye sincere and impartial followers of Jesus, friends of truth and peace, we dare not, we cannot, think otherwise of you; it would be doing violence to your character; it would be inconsistent with your prayers and profession, so to do. We shall therefore have *your* hearty concurrence.

But if any of our dear brethren, from whom we should expect better things, should, through weakness or prejudice, be in anything otherwise minded, than we have ventured to suppose, we charitably hope, that, in due time, God will reveal even this unto them: Only let such neither refuse to come to the light; nor yet through prejudice, reject it, when it shines upon them. Let them rather seriously consider what we have thus most seriously and respectfully submitted to their consideration, weigh every sentiment in the balance of the sanctuary, as in the sight of God, with earnest prayer

for, and humble reliance upon his spirit; and not in the spirit of self-sufficiency and party zeal, and, in so doing, we rest assured, the consequence will be happy, both for their own, and the church's peace.

*No Personal Superiority Claimed.*—Let none imagine, that in so saying, we arrogate to ourselves a degree of intelligence superior to our brethren, much less superior to mistake; so far from this, our confidence is entirely founded upon the express Scripture and matter of fact evidence, of the things referred to; which may nevertheless, through inattention, or prejudice, fail to produce their proper effect; as has been the case, with respect to some of the most evident truths, in a thousand instances. But charity thinketh no evil: and we are far from surmising, though we must speak. To warn even against possible evils, is certainly no breach of charity, as to be confident of the certainty of some things, is no just argument of presumption. We by no means claim the approbation of our brethren, as to anything we have suggested for promoting the sacred cause of christian unity; farther than it carries its own evidence along with it; but we humbly claim a fair investigation of the subject; and solicit the assistance of our brethren for carrying into effect what we have thus weakly attempted. It is our consolation, in the meantime, that the desired event, as certain as it will be happy and glorious, admits of no dispute; however we may hesitate, or differ, about the proper means of promoting it.

*The Only Hopeful Platform for Unity.*—All we shall venture to say as to this, is that we trust we have taken the proper ground, at least, if we have not, we despair of finding it elsewhere. For if holding fast in profession and practice whatever is expressly revealed and enjoined in the divine standard does not under the promised influence of the divine spirit, prove an adequate basis for promoting and maintaining unity, peace and purity, we utterly despair of attaining those invaluable privileges, by adopting the standard of any party. To advocate the cause of unity while espousing the interests of a party would appear as absurd, as for this country to take part with either of the belligerents in the present awful struggle, which has convulsed and is convulsing the nations, in order to maintain her neutrality and secure her peace. Nay, it would be adopting the very means, by which the bewildered Church has, for hundreds of years past, been rending and dividing herself into factions; for Christ's sake and for the truth's sake; though the first and foundation truth of our christianity is union with him, and the very next to it in order, union with each other in him—"that we receive each other, as Christ has also received us; to the glory of God;" "And this is the commandment that we should believe in the name of his son Jesus Christ, and love one another, as he gave us commandment. And he that keepeth his

commandments dwelleth in him, and he in him—and hereby we know that he dwelleth in us, by the spirit which he hath given us’’—even the spirit of faith, and of love, and of a sound mind. And surely this should suffice us.

*Closed Communion Unbrotherly.*—But how to love, and receive our brother; as we believe and hope Christ has received both him and us, and yet refuse to hold communion with him, is, we confess, a mystery too deep for us. If this be the way that Christ hath received us, then woe is unto us. We do not here intend a professed brother transgressing the expressed letter of the law, and refusing to be reclaimed. Whatever may be our charity in such a case, we have not sufficient evidence that Christ hath received him, or that he hath received Christ as his teacher and Lord. To adopt means, then, apparently subversive of the very end proposed, means which the experience of ages has evinced successful only in overthrowing the visible interests of christianity; in counteracting, as far as possible, the declared intention, the expressed command of its Divine Author; would appear in no wise a prudent measure for removing and preventing those evils.

To maintain unity and purity has always been the plausible pretence of the compilers and abettors of human systems; and we believe in many instances their sincere intention: but have they at all answered the end? Confessedly, demonstrably, they have not—no, not even in the several parties which have most strictly adopted them—much less to the catholic professing body. Instead of her catholic constitutional unity and purity, what does the church present us with, at this day, but a catalogue of sects and sectarian systems; each binding its respective party by the most sacred and solemn engagements, to continue as it is to the end of the world; at least this is confessedly the case with many of them. What a sorry substitute these, for Christian unity and love. On the other hand, what a mercy is it, that no human obligation that man can come under is valid against the truth.

*The Better Day to Be.*—When the Lord the healer, descends upon his people, to give them a discovery of the nature and tendency of those artificial bonds, wherewith they have suffered themselves to be bound, in their dark and sleepy condition: they will no more be able to hold them in a state of sectarian bondage; than the withs and cords with which the Philistines bound Sampson were able to retain him their prisoner; or, than the bonds of anti-Christ were, to hold in captivity the fathers of the reformation.

May the Lord soon open the eyes of his people to see these things in their true light and excite them to come up out of their wilderness condition—out of this babel of confusion—leaning upon their beloved, and embracing each other in him; holding fast the unity of the spirit in the bonds of peace. This gracious duty and unanimity in Jesus would afford the best external evidence of their union

with him; and of their conjoint interest in the Father's love. "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples," saith he, "if ye have love one to another." And "this is my commandment that ye love one another as I have loved you; that ye also love one another." And again, "Holy Father, keep through thine own name, those whom thou hast given me that they may be one as we are," even "all that shall believe in me—that they all may be one; as thou Father art in me and I in thee, that they also may be one in us; that the world may believe that thou hast sent me. And the glory which thou gavest me; I have given them, that they may be one, even as we are one: I in them and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in me; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me." May the Lord hasten it in his time. Farewell.

Peace be with all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity. Amen.

THOMAS CAMPBELL, Secretary,  
THOMAS ACHESON, Treasurer.

## XII. COMMENT UPON THE ABOVE

THE concluding section of *The Declaration and Address* presents no new note of argument but does intensify the plea for a fair hearing, urged earlier in the document. The author pleads earnestly with his brethren for an impartial attitude on the part of those who cannot immediately agree with him. He is again careful to claim no personal superiority for himself, resting his case entirely, as before, upon an appeal to the "right reason" of his brethren. He has no fear but that his message will prevail unless "through inattention or prejudice" his words "fail to produce their proper effect." He has supreme confidence in the substantial unanimity of the decisions of reason when the voice of the latter can be fairly invoked. If for any reason his conclusions should fail to stand the test, he wants it understood that he is perfectly willing to give them up. His attitude here, and elsewhere throughout *The Declaration*, is precisely that of the honest seeker for truth in any department of science. Huxley himself could have asked for nothing fairer than such a proposition. Doubtless the followers of Thomas Campbell have not always understood or ob-



served this underlying principle of his plea. Nevertheless the writer believes it is fair to say that the genius of their movement has, at all times, embodied this ideal and still embodies it to a degree not often appreciated.

The new platform for unity appears to its author to be infinitely more hopeful than any other proposition before the Christian world. It is well to remember that at this time there was no other proposition available aside from the invitation to complete surrender and submission held out by all the competing parties. Any or all of these invitations look quite as hopeless today as they did a century ago. If we must wait for unity until some one of the present denominations or parties in Christendom swallows all of the others, we shall doubtless wait a long time. It was the fear of adding another party to the already too numerous parties which held back the Campbells from any definite attempt at organizational propaganda for two decades.

The parallel between the divided Church and the warfare of the nations during the Napoleonic period was evidently as appealing when *The Declaration and Address* was written as is a similar parallel with the World War of 1914 today. Probably the conclusion drawn by Mr. Campbell holds good for the present also. World peace, like religious peace, can never be secured by partisan struggle. Only in the ordered and harmonious adjustment of relations as a whole can the goal be achieved. Nationalism in politics and denominationalism in religion were born together and must die together before unity arrives in the world field.

In the very last section of *The Declaration*, the author touches upon the historic incident which was the occasion of the document's production: "How to love and receive our brother; as we believe and hope Christ has received both him and us, and yet refuse to hold communion with him, is we confess a mystery too deep for us." The argument in these words is conclusive. If the

communion table, which is above every other ordinance in the Christian religion, the symbol and embodiment of the ideal of unity and brotherhood, is to be made a means of perpetuating division, surely the gospel is perverted at its very source. It was the criticism of his practicing open communion which led Thomas Campbell to take his stand in behalf of Christian union. Whether he would have taken this position had conditions been less aggravating, one cannot say. Beyond any question, upon the basis of Presbyterian practice at the present time, he might have lived and died within the fold of that church. Like many another reform movement, the plea of the Campbells gathered momentum and its outlook became enlarged as its independent career developed. Denominationalism is infinitely less bitter today than it was a hundred years ago, but the ideal of Christian union is still far away. Were the elder Campbell to come back, we feel sure that he would regard our present situation as one which calls for the proclamation of the divine program for unity quite as urgently as was true in his own day.

The last words of *The Declaration and Address* are climactic in their appropriateness and in their enduring value. The ultimate test of discipleship is unity through love. The ultimate guarantee of power for the church is the same type of unity. Whatever we may think of the validity of Thomas Campbell's program, we dare not impeach the underlying principles which dictated its proclamation and which still give power to its message.

PART III  
THE APPENDIX



## PART III—THE APPENDIX

### I. TEXT OF THE APPENDIX TO THE DECLARATION AND ADDRESS\*

**R**EASONS for Adding the Appendix. To prevent mistakes, we beg leave to subjoin the following explanations. As to what we have done, our reasons for so doing, and the grand object we would desire to see accomplished, all these, we presume, are sufficiently declared in the foregoing pages. As to what we intend to do in our associate capacity, though expressly and definitely declared, yet these, perhaps, might be liable to some misconstruction.

*No Intention of Proselyting.* First, then, we beg leave to assure our brethren that we have no intention to interfere, either directly or indirectly, with the peace and order of the settled Churches, by directing any ministerial assistance with which the Lord may please to favor us to make inroads upon such; or by endeavoring to erect Churches out of Churches, to distract and divide congregations. We have no nostrum, no peculiar discovery of our own to propose to fellow-Christians, for the fancied importance of which they should become followers of us. We propose to patronize nothing but the inculcation of the express word of God, either as to matter of faith or practice; but every one that has a Bible, and can read it, can read this for himself. Therefore, we have nothing new.

Neither do we pretend to acknowledge persons to be ministers of Christ, and, at the same time, consider it our duty to forbid or discourage people to go to hear them, merely because they may hold some things disagreeable to us; much less to encourage their people to leave them on that account. And such do we esteem all who preach a free, unconditional salvation through the blood of Jesus to perishing sinners of every description, and who manifestly connect with this a life of holiness and pastoral diligence in the performance of all the duties of the sacred office, according to the Scriptures, of even all of whom, as to all appearance, it may be truly said to the objects of their charge: "They seek not *yours*, but *you*." May the good Lord prosper all such, by whatever name they are called, and hasten that happy period when Zion's watchmen shall see eye to eye, and all be called by the same name. *Such*, then, have nothing to fear from our associations, were our resources equal to our utmost wishes. But all others we esteem

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\*This appendix is a copy of the original writing and explanation which was attached to the Declaration and Address.

as hirelings, as idle shepherds, and should be glad to see the Lord's flock delivered from their mouth, according to his promise. Our principal and proper design, then, with respect to ministerial assistants, such as we have described in our fifth resolution, is to direct their attention to those places where there is manifest need for their labors; and many such places there are; would to God it were in our power to supply them.

*Attitude on Creeds.*—As to creeds and confessions, although we may appear to our brethren to oppose them, yet this is to be understood only in *so far* as they oppose the unity of the Church, by containing sentiments not expressly revealed in the word of God; or, by the way of using them, become the instruments of a human or implicit faith, or oppress the weak of God's heritage. Where they are liable to none of these objections, we have nothing against them. It is the *abuse* and not the *lawful use* of such complications that we oppose. See Proposition 7, page 50.

Our intention, therefore, with respect to all the Churches of Christ is perfectly amicable. We heartily wish their reformation, but by no means their hurt or confusion. Should any affect to say that our coming forward as we have done, in advancing and publishing such things, has a manifest tendency to distract and divide the Churches, or to make a new party, we treat it as a confident and groundless assertion, and must suppose they have not duly considered, or, at least, not well understood the subject.

*Not a New Party.* All we shall say to this at present, is, that the Divine word be not the standard of a party, then are we not a party principle, then are we not a party, for we have adopted no other. If to maintain its alone sufficiency be not a party principle, then are we not a party. If to justify this principle by our practice, in making a rule of it, and of *it alone*, and not of our own opinions, nor of those of others, be not a party principle, then are we not a party. If to propose and practice neither more nor less than it expressly reveals and enjoying be not a partial business, then are we not a party. These are the very sentiments we have approved and recommended as a society formed for the express purpose of promoting Christian unity, in opposition to a party spirit.

Should any tell us that to do these things is impossible without the intervention of human reason and opinion, we humbly thank them for the discovery. But who ever thought otherwise? Were we not rational subjects, and of course capable of understanding and forming opinions, would it not evidently appear that, to us, revelation of any kind would be quite useless, even suppose it as evident as mathematics?

We pretend not, therefore, to divest ourselves of reason, that we may become quite inoffensive, and peaceable Christians; nor yet, of any of its proper and legitimate operations upon Divinely revealed truths. We only pretend to assert, what every one that

pretends to reason must acknowledge, namely, that there is a manifest distinction between an express Scripture declaration, and the conclusion or inference which may be deduced from it; and that the former may be clearly understood, even where the latter is but imperfectly if at all perceived; and that we are at least as certain of the declaration as we can be of the conclusion we drew from it; and that, after all, the conclusion ought not to be exalted above the premises, so as to make void the declaration for the sake of setabliſhing our own conclusion; and that, therefore, the express commands to preserve and maintain inviolate Christian unity and love, ought not to be set aside to make way for exalting our inferences above the express authority of God.

*The Only Test of Fellowship—A Thus Saith the Lord.* Our inference, upon the whole, is, that where a professing Christian brother opposes or refuses nothing either in faith or practice, for which there can be expressly produced a “Thus saith the Lord,” that we ought not to reject him because he cannot see with our eyes as to matters of human inference, of private judgment. “Through thy knowledge shall the weak brother perish? How walkest thou not charitably?”

Thus we reason, thus we conclude, to make no conclusion of our own, nor of any other fallible fellow-creature, a rule of faith or duty to our brother. Whether we refuse reason, then, or abuse it, in our so doing, let our brethren judge. But, after all, we have only ventured to suggest what, in other words, the apostle has expressly taught; namely, that the strong ought to bear with the infirmities of the weak, and not to please themselves; that we ought to receive him that is weak in the faith, because God has received him. In a word, that we ought to receive one another, as Christ has also received us to the glory of God. We dare not, therefore, patronize the rejection of God’s dear children, because they may not be able to see alike in matters of human inference—of private opinion; and such we esteem all things not expressly revealed and enjoined in the word of God. If otherwise, we know not what private opinion means.

*The Declaration not a “Rock of Offence.”* On the other hand should our peaceful and affectionate overture for union in truth prove offensive to any of our brethren, or occasion disturbances in any of the Churches, the blame cannot be attached to us. We have only ventured to persuade, and, if possible, to excite to the performance of an important duty—a duty equally incumbent upon us all. Neither have we pretended to dictate to *them* what *they* should do. We have only proposed what appeared to us most likely to promote the desired event, humbly submitting the whole premises to their candid and impartial investigation, to be altered, corrected, and amended, as they see cause, or to adopt any other plan that may appear more just and exceptionable.

As for ourselves, we have taken all due care, in the meantime,

to take no step that might throw a stumbling-block in the way, that might prove now, or at any future period, a barrier to prevent the accomplishment of that most desirable object, either by joining to support a party, or by patronizing anything as articles of faith or duty not expressly enjoined in the Divine standard; as we are sure, whatever alterations may take place, *that* will stand. That considerable alterations must and will take place, in the standards of all the sects, before that glorious object can be accomplished, no man, that duly considers the matter, can possibly doubt.

In so far, then, we have at least endeavored to act consistently; and with the same consistency would desire to be instrumental in erecting as many Churches as possible throughout the desolate places of God's heritage, upon the same catholic foundation, being well persuaded that every such erection will not only in the issue prove an accession to the general cause, but will also, in the meantime, be a step toward it, and of course, will reap the first-fruits of that blissful harvest that will fill the face of the world with fruit. For if the first Christian Churches, walking in the fear of the Lord in holy unity and unanimity, enjoyed the comforts of the Holy Spirit, and were increased and edified, we have reason to believe that walking in their footsteps will everywhere and at all times insure the same blessed privileges. And it is in exact conformity to their recorded and approved example, that, we through grace, would be desirous to promote the erection of Churches; and this we believe to be quite practicable, if the legible and authentic records of *their* faith and practice be handed down to *us* upon the page of New Testament Scripture; but if otherwise, we cannot help it.

*Suppose the New Testament Wrong?* Yet, even in this case, might we not humbly presume that the Lord would take the will for the deed? for if there be first a willing mind, we are told, "it is accepted according to what a man hath, and not according to what he hath not."

It would appear, then, that sincerely and humbly adopting this model, with an entire reliance upon promised grace, we cannot, we shall not, be disappointed. By this, at least, we shall get rid of two great evils, which, we fear, are at this day grievously provoking the Lord to plead a controversy with the Churches: we mean the taking and giving of unjust offenses; judging and rejecting each other in matters wherein the Lord hath not judged, in a flat contradiction to his expressly revealed will. But, according to the principle adopted, we can neither take offense at our brother for his private opinions, if he be content to hold them as such, nor yet offend him with ours, if he do not usurp the place of the lawgiver; and even suppose he should, in this case we judge him, not for his *opinions*, but for his *presumption*. "There is one Lawgiver, who is able to save and to destroy; who are thou that judgest another?"



But further, to prevent mistakes, we beg leave to explain our meaning in a sentence or two which might possibly be misunderstood. In the first page we say, that no man has a right to judge his brother, except in so far as he manifestly violates the express letter of the law. By the law here, and elsewhere, when taken in this latitude, we mean that whole revelation of faith and duty expressly declared in the Divine word, taken together, or in its due connection, upon every article, and not any detached sentence. We understand it as extending to all prohibitions, as well as to all requirements. "Add thou not unto his words, lest he reprove thee, and thou be found a liar." We dare, therefore, neither do nor receive anything as of Divine obligation for which there cannot be expressly produced a "Thus saith the Lord," either in express terms or by approved precedent. According to this rule we judge and beyond it we dare not go.

Taking this sentiment in connection with the last clause of the fifth resolution, we are to be understood, of all matters of faith and practice, of primary and universal obligation; that is to say, of express revelation; that nothing be inculcated, as such, for which there cannot be expressly produced a "Thus saith the Lord," as above, without, at the same time, interfering directly or indirectly with the private judgment of any individual, which does not expressly contradict the express letter of the law, or add to the number of its institutions. Every sincere and upright Christian will understand and do the will of God, in every instance, to the best of his skill and judgment; but in the application of the general rule to particular cases there may, and doubtless will, be some variety of opinion and practice. This, we see, was actually the case in the apostolic Churches, without any breach of Christian unity; and if this was the case at the erection of the Christian Church from among Jews and Gentiles, may we not reasonably expect that it will be the same at her restoration from under her long antichristian and sectarian desolations?

*Union by Forbearance.* With a direct reference to this state of things, and, as we humbly think, in a perfect consistency with the foregoing explanations, have we expressed ourselves in the thirty-ninth page, wherein we declare ourselves ready to relinquish whatever we have hitherto received as matter of faith or practice, not expressly taught and enjoined in the word of God, so that we and our brethren might, by this mutual concession, return together to the original constitutional unity of the Christian Church, and dwell together in peace and charity. By this proposed relinquishment we are to be understood, in the first instance, of our manner of holding those things, and not simply of the things themselves; for no man can relinquish his opinions or practices till once convinced that they are wrong; and this he may not be immediately, even supposing they were so. One thing, however, he may do: when not bound by an express command, he need not impose them

upon others, by anywise requiring their approbation; and when this is done, the things, to them, are as good as dead, yea, as good as buried, too, being thus removed out of the way.

Has not the apostle set us a noble example of this in his pious and charitable zeal for the comfort and edification of his brother, in declaring himself ready to forego his rights (not indeed to break commandments) rather than stumble, or offend, his brother? And who knows not that the Hebrew Christians abstained from certain meats, observed certain days, kept the passover, circumcised their children, etc., etc., while no such things were practiced by the Gentile converts, and yet no breach of unity while they charitably forebore one with the other. But had the Jews been expressly prohibited, or the Gentiles expressly enjoined, by the authority of Jesus, to observe these things, could they, in such a case, have lawfully exercised this forbearance? But where no express law is, there can be no formal, no intentional transgression, even although its implicit and necessary consequences had forbid the thing, had they been discovered.

Upon the whole, we see one thing is evident: the Lord will bear with the weaknesses, the involuntary ignorances, and mistakes of his people, though not with their presumption. Ought they not, therefore, to bear with each other—"to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace; forbearing one with another in love?" What says the Scripture? We say, then, the declaration referred to is to be thus understood in the first instance; though we do not say but something further is intended. For certainly we may lawfully suspend both declaration and practice upon any subject, where the law is silent; when to do otherwise must prevent the accomplishment of an expressly commanded and highly important duty; and such, confessedly, is the thing in question. What says the apostle? "All things are lawful for me; but all things are not expedient. All things are lawful for me; but all things edify not."

It seems, then, that among unlawful things which might be forborne—that is, we humbly conceive, things not expressly commanded—the governing principle of the apostle's conduct was the edification of his brethren of the Church of God. A Divine principle this, indeed! May the Lord God infuse it into all his people. Were all those non-preceptive opinions and practices which have been maintained and exalted to the destruction of the Church's unity, counterbalanced with the breach of the express law of Christ, and the black catalogue of mischiefs which have necessarily ensued, on which side, think you, would be the preponderance? When weighed in the balance with this monstrous complex evil, would they not all appear lighter than vanity? Who, then, would not relinquish a cent to obtain a kingdom! And here let it be noted, that it is not the renunciation of an opinion or practice as sinful that is proposed or intended, but merely a cessation from the publishing or practicing it, so as to give offense; a thing men are in the habit of doing every day for their private comfort or secular

emolument, where the advantage is of infinitely less importance. Neither is there here any clashing of duties, as if to forbear was a sin and also to practice was sin; the thing to be forborne being a matter of private opinion, which, though not expressly forbidden, yet are we by no means expressly commanded to practice; whereas we are expressly commanded to endeavor to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. And what says the apostle to the doing in hand? "Hast thou faith," says he; "have it to thyself before God. Happy is the man that condemneth not himself in the thing which he alloweth."

*Advantage of Clearing Away Dead Material.* It may be further added, that a still higher and more perfect degree of uniformity is intended, though neither in the first nor second instance, which are but so many steps toward it; namely: the utter abolition of those minor differences, which have been greatly increased, as well as continued, by our unhappy manner of treating them, in making them the subject of perpetual strife and contention. Many of the opinions which are now dividing the Church, had they been let alone, would have been long since dead and gone; but the constant insisting upon them, as articles of faith and terms of salvation, have so beaten them into the minds of men, that, in many instances, they would as soon deny the Bible itself as give up one of those opinions. Having thus embraced contentions and preferred divisions to that constitutional unity, peace, and charity so essential to Christianity, it would appear that the Lord, in righteous judgment, has abandoned his professing people to the awful scourge of those evils; as, in an instance somewhat similar, he formerly did his highly favored Israel. "My people," says he, "would not hearken to my voice. So I gave them up to their own hearts' lusts, and they walked in their own counsels." "Israel hath made many altars to sin: therefore altars shall be unto him to sin."

Thus, then, are we to be consistently understood, as fully and fairly intending, on *our* part, what we have declared and proposed to our brethren, as, to *our* apprehension, incumbent upon *them* and *us*, for putting an end forever to our sad and lamentable schisms. Should any object and say that, after all, the fullest compliance with everything proposed and intended would not restore the Church to the desired unity, as there might remain differences of opinion and practice; let such but duly consider what properly belongs to the unity of the Church, and we are persuaded this objection will vanish. Does not the visible Scriptural unity of her public profession and practice, and, under this, in the manifest charity of her members, one toward another, and not in the unity of private opinion and practice of every individual? Was not this evidently the case in the apostles' days, as has been already observed? If so, the objection falls to the ground. And here let it be noted (if the hint be at all necessary), that we are speaking of the unity of the church considered as a great, visible, professing

body, consisting of many co-ordinate associations; each of these, in its aggregate or associate capacity, walking by the same rule, professing and practicing the same things. That this visible Scriptural unity be preserved without corruption, or breach of charity, throughout the whole, and in every particular worshiping society or Church, is the grand desideratum—the thing strictly enjoined and greatly to be desired. An agreement in the expressly revealed will of God is the adequate and firm foundation of this unity; ardent prayer, accompanied with prudent, peaceable, and persevering exertion, in the use of all Scriptural means for accomplishing it, are the things humbly suggested and earnestly recommended to our brethren. If we have mistaken the way, their charity will put us right; but if other wise, their fidelity to Christ and his cause will excite them to come forth speedily, to assist with us in the blessed work.

*The Charge of Latitudinarianism.* After all, should any impeach us with the vague charge of Latitudinarianism (let none be startled at this gigantic term), it will prove as feeble an opponent to the glorious cause in which we, however, weak and unworthy, are professedly engaged, as the Zamzummins did of old, to prevent the children of Lot from taking possession of their inheritance. If we take no greater latitude than the Divine law allows, either in judging of persons or doctrines—either in profession or practice (and this is the very thing we humbly propose and sincerely intend), may we not reasonably hope that such a latitude will appear, to every upright Christian, perfectly innocent and unexceptional? If this be Latitudinarianism, it must be a good thing, and, therefore, the more we have of it the better; and may be it is, for we are told, “the commandment is exceeding broad”; and we intend to go just as far as it will suffer us, but not one hairbreadth further; so, at least, says our profession. And surely it will be time enough to condemn our practice, when it appears manifestly inconsistent with the profession we have thus precisely and explicitly made. We here refer to the whole of the foregoing premises. But were this word as bad as it is long, were it stuffed with evil from beginning to end, may be it better belongs to those that brandish it so unmercifully at their neighbors, especially if they take a greater latitude than their neighbors do, or than the Divine law allows.

Let the case, then, be fairly submitted to all that know their Bible, to all that take upon them to see with their own eyes, to judge for themselves. And here let it be observed once for all, that it is only to such we direct our attention in the foregoing pages. As for those that either cannot or will not see and judge for themselves, they must be content to follow their leaders till they come to their eyesight, or determine to make use of the faculties and means of information which God has given them; with such, in the meantime, it would be useless to reason, seeing that they either confessedly cannot see, or have completely resigned

themselves to the conduct of their leaders, and are therefore determined to hearken to none but them. If there be none such, however, we are happily deceived; but, if so, we are not the only persons that are thus deceived; for this is the common fault objected by almost all the parties to each other, namely, that they either cannot or will not see; and it would be hard to think they were all mistaken; the fewer there be, however, of this description, the better.

To all those, then, that are disposed to see and think for themselves, to form their judgment by the Divine word itself, and not by any human explication of it, humbly relying upon and looking for the promised assistance of Divine teaching, and not barely trusting to their own understanding—to all such do we gladly commit our cause, being persuaded that, at least, they will give it a very serious and impartial consideration, as being truly desirous to know the truth. To you, then, we appeal, in the present instance, as we have also done from the beginning. Say, we beseech you, to whom does the charge of Latitudinarianism, when taken in a bad sense (for we have supposed it may be taken in a good sense), most truly and properly belong, whether to those that will neither add nor diminish anything as to matter of faith and duty, either to or from what is expressly revealed and enjoined in the holy Scriptures, or to those who pretend to go further than this, or to set aside some of its express declarations and injunctions, to make way for their own opinions, inferences, and conclusions? Whether to those who profess their willingness to hold communion with their acknowledged Christian brethren, when they neither manifestly oppose nor contradict anything expressly revealed and enjoined in the sacred standard, or to those who reject such, when professing to believe and practice whatever is expressly revealed and enjoined therein, without, at the same time, being *alleged* much less *found* guilty, of anything to the contrary, but instead of this asserting and declaring their hearty assent and consent to everything for which there can be expressly produced a “Thus saith the Lord,” either in express terms or by approved precedent? To which of these, think you, does the odious charge of Latitudinarianism belong? Which of them takes the greatest latitude? Whether those that expressly judge and condemn where they have no express warrant for so doing, or those that absolutely refuse so to do? And we can assure our brethren, that such things are and have been done, to our own certain knowledge, and even where we least expect it; and that it is to this discovery, as much as to many other things, that we stand indebted for that thorough conviction of the evil state of things in the Churches, which has given rise to our association.

*Three Great Evils.* As for our part, we dare no longer give our assent to such proceedings; we dare no longer concur in expressly asserting or declaring anything in the name of the Lord, that he has not expressly declared in his holy word. And until such time

as Christians come to see the evil of doing otherwise, we see no rational ground to hope that there can be either unity, peace, purity, or prosperity, in the Church of God. Convinced of the truth of this, we would humbly desire to be instrumental in pointing out to our fellow-Christians the evils of such conduct. And if we might venture to give our opinion of such proceedings, we would not hesitate to say, that they appear to include three great evils—evils truly great in themselves, and at the same time productive of most evil consequences.

First, to determine expressly, in the name of the Lord, when the Lord has not expressly determined, appears to us a very great evil. (See Deut. xviii: 20. “The prophet that shall presume to speak a word in my name, which I have not commanded him to speak, even that prophet shall die.” The apostle Paul, no doubt, well aware of this, cautiously distinguishes between his own judgment and the express injunctions of the Lord. (See I Cor. vii: 25 and 40.) Though, at the same time, it appears that he was as well convinced of the truth and propriety of his declarations, and of the concurrence of the Holy Spirit with his judgment, as any of our modern determiners may be; for “I think,” said he, “that I have the Spirit of God”; and we doubt much, if the best of them could honestly say more than this; yet we see that, with all this, he would not bind the Church with his conclusions; and, for this very reason, as he expressly tells us, because, as to the matter on hand, he had no commandment of the Lord. He spoke by permission, and not by commandment, as one that had obtained mercy to be faithful, and therefore would not forge his Master’s name by affixing it to his own conclusions, saying, “The Lord saith, when the Lord had not spoken.”

A second evil is, not only judging our brother to be absolutely wrong, because he differs from our opinions, but more especially, our judging him to be a transgressor of the law in so doing, and, of course, treating him as such by censuring or otherwise exposing him to contempt, or, at least, preferring ourselves before him in our own judgment, saying, as it were, Stand by, I am holier than thou.

A third and still more dreadful evil is, when we not only, in this kind of way, judge and set at naught our brother, but, moreover, proceed as a Church, acting and judging in the name of Christ, not only to determine that our brother is wrong because he differs from our determinations, but also, in connection with this, proceed so far as to determine the merits of the cause by rejecting him, or casting him out of the Church, as unworthy of a place in her communion, and thus, as far as in our power, cutting him off from the kingdom of heaven. In proceeding thus, we not only declare, that, in our judgment, our brother is in an error, which we may sometimes do in a perfect consistence with charity, but we also take upon us to judge, as acting in the name and by the au-

thority of Christ, that his error cuts him off from salvation; that continuing such, he has no inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God. If not, what means our refusing him—our casting him out of the Church, which is the kingdom of God in this world?

*Consequences of Excommunication.* For certainly, if a person have no right, according to the Divine word, to a place in the Church of God upon earth (which we say he has not, by thus rejecting him), he can have none to a place in the Church in heaven—unless we should suppose that those whom Christ by his word rejects here, he will nevertheless receive hereafter. And surely it is by the word that every Church pretends to judge; and it is by this rule, in the case before us, that the person in the judgment of the Church stands rejected.

Now is not this, to all intents and purposes, determining the merits of the cause? Do we not conclude that the person's error cuts him off from all ordinary possibility of salvation, by thus cutting him off from a place in the Church, out of which there is no ordinary possibility of salvation? Does he not henceforth become to us as a heathen man and a publican? Is he not reckoned among the number of those that are without, whom God judgeth? If not, what means such a solemn determination? Is it anything or is it nothing, for a person to stand rejected by the Church of God?

If such rejection confessedly leave the man still in the same safe and hopeful state as to his spiritual interests, then, indeed, it becomes a matter of mere indifference; for as to his civil and natural privileges, it interferes not with them. But the Scripture gives us a very different view of the matter; for there we see that those that stand justly rejected by the Church on earth, have no room to hope for a place in the Church of heaven. "What ye bind on earth shall be bound in heaven" is the awful sanction of the Church's judgment, in justly rejecting any person. Take away this, and it has no sanction at all. But the Church rejecting, always pretends to have acted justly in so doing, and, if so, whereabouts does it confessedly leave the person rejected, if not in a state of damnation? that is to say, if it acknowledge itself to be a Church of Christ, and to have acted justly?

If, after all, any particular Church acting thus should refuse the foregoing conclusion, by saying: We meant no such thing concerning the person rejected; we only judged him unworthy of a place among *us*, and therefore put him away, but there are other Churches that may receive him; we would be almost tempted to ask such a Church, if those other Churches be Churches of Christ, and if so, pray what does it account itself? Is it anything more or better than a Church of Christ? And whether, if those other Churches do their duty as faithful Churches, any of them would receive the person it had rejected? If it be answered that, in acting faithfully, none of those other Churches either could or would receive him, then, confessedly, in the judgment of this particular

Church, the person ought to be universally rejected; but if otherwise, it condemns itself of having acted unfaithfully, nay cruelly, toward a Christian brother, a child of God, in thus rejecting him from the heritage of the Lord, in thus cutting him off from his Father's house, as the unnatural brethren did the beloved Joseph.

But even suppose some one or other of those unfaithful Churches should receive the outcast, would their unfaithfulness in so doing nullify, in the judgment of this more faithful Church, its just and faithful decision in rejecting him? If not, then confessedly, in its judgment, the person still remains under the influence of its righteous sentence, debarred from the kingdom of heaven; that is to say, if it believe the Scriptures, that what it has righteously done upon earth is ratified in heaven. We see no way that a Church acting *thus* can possibly get rid of this *awful conclusion*, except it acknowledges that the person it has rejected from its communion still has a right to the communion of the Church; but if it acknowledge this, whereabouts does it leave itself, in thus shutting out a fellow-Christian, an acknowledged brother, a child of God? Do we find any parallel for such conduct in the inspired records, except in the case of Diotrefes, of whom the apostle says, "Who loveth to have the pre-eminence among them, receiveth us not, prating against us with malicious words: and not content therewith, neither doth he himself receive the brethren, and forbiddeth them that would, and casteth them out of the Church."

But further, suppose another Church should receive this cast-away, this person which this faithful Church supposed itself to have righteously rejected, would not the Church so doing incur the displeasure, nay even the *censure* of the Church that had rejected him? and, we should think, justly too if he deserved to be rejected. And would not this naturally produce a schism between the Churches? Or, if it be supposed that a schism did already exist, would not this manifestly tend to perpetuate and increase it? If one Church, receiving those whom another puts away, will not be productive of schism, we must confess we cannot tell what would.

That Church, therefore, must surely act very schismatically, very unlike a Church of Christ, which necessarily presupposes or produces schism in order to shield an oppressed fellow-Christian from the dreadful consequences of its unrighteous proceedings. And is not this confessedly the case with every Church which rejects a person from its communion while it acknowledges him to be a fellow-Christian; and, in order to excuse this piece of cruelty, says he may find refuge some place else, some other Church may receive him? For, as we have already observed, if no schism did already exist, one Church receiving those whom another has rejected must certainly make one. The same evils also will as justly attach to the conduct of an individual who refuses or breaks communion with a Church because it will not receive or make room for his private opinions or self-devised practices in its public profession and man-



agements; for does he not, in this case, actually take upon him to judge the Church which he thus rejects as unworthy of the communion of Christians? And is not this, to all intents and purposes, declaring it, in his judgment, excommunicate, or at least worthy of excommunication?

*The True Basis of Union.* Thus have we briefly endeavored to show our brethren what evidently appears to us to be the heinous nature and dreadful consequences of that truly latitudinarian principle and practice which is the bitter root of almost all our divisions, namely, the imposing of our private opinions upon each other as articles of faith or duty, introducing them into the public profession and practice of the Church, and acting upon them as if they were the express law of Christ, by judging and rejecting our brethren that differ from us in those things, or at least by so retaining them in our public profession and practice that our brethren cannot join with us, or we with them, without becoming actually partakers in those things which they or we cannot in conscience approve, and which the word of God nowhere expressly enjoins upon us.

To cease from all such things, by simply returning to the original standard of Christianity, the profession and practice of the primitive Church, as expressly exhibited upon the sacred page of New Testament Scripture, is the only possible way that we can perceive to get rid of those evils. And we humbly think that a uniform agreement in *that* for the preservation of charity would be infinitely preferable to our contentions and divisions; nay, that such a uniformity is the very thing that the Lord requires if the New Testament Scripture, is the only possible way that we can worship, discipline, and government of the Christian Church. Let us do as we are there expressly told *they* did, say as *they* said; that is, profess and practice as therein expressly enjoined by precept and precedent, in every possible instance, after *their* approved example; and in doing so we shall realize and exhibit all that unity and uniformity that the primitive Church possessed, or that the law of Christ requires. But if, after all, our brethren can point out a better way to regain and preserve that Christian unity and charity expressly enjoined upon the Church of God, we shall thank them for the discovery, and cheerfully embrace it.

*Different Interpretations of Scriptures.* Should it still be urged that this would open a wide door to latitudinarianism, seeing all that profess Christianity profess to receive the holy Scriptures, and yet differ so widely in their religious sentiments, we say, let them profess what they will, their difference in religious profession and practice originates in their departure from what is expressly revealed and enjoined, and not in their strict and faithful conformity to it, which is the thing we humbly advise for putting an end to those differences. But you may say, Do they not already all agree in the letter, though differing so far in sentiment? However, this may be, have they all agreed to make the letter their rule, or, rather,

to make it the subject-matter of their profession and practice? Surely not, or else they would all profess and practice the same thing.

Is it not as evident as the shining light that the Scriptures exhibit but one and the self-same subject-matter of profession and practice, at all times and in all places, and that, therefore, to say as it declares, and to do as it prescribes in all its holy precepts, its approved and imitable examples, would unite the Christian Church in a holy sameness of profession and practice throughout the whole world? By the Christian Church throughout the world, we mean the aggregate of such professors as we have described in Propositions 1 and 8, pages 48 and 50, even all that mutually acknowledge each other as Christians, upon the manifest evidence of their faith, holiness, and charity. It is such only we intend when we urge the necessity of Christian unity. Had only such been all along recognized as the genuine subjects of our holy religion, there would not, in all probability, have been so much apparent need for human formulas to preserve an external formality of professional unity and soundness in the faith, but artificial and superficial characters need artificial means to train and unite them.

A manifest attachment to our Lord Jesus Christ in faith, holiness, and charity, was the original criterion of Christian character, the distinguishing badge of our holy profession, the foundation and cement of Christian unity. But now, alas! and long since, an external name, a mere educational formality of sameness in the profession of a certain standard or formula of human fabric, with a very moderate degree of what is called morality, forms the bond and foundation, the root and reason of ecclesiastical unity.

Take away from such the technicalness of their profession, the shibboleth of party, and what have they more? What have they left to distinguish and hold them together? As for the Bible, they are but little beholden to it, they have learned little from it, they know little about it, and therefore depend as little upon it. Nay, they will even tell you it would be of no use to them without their formula; they could not know a Papist from a Protestant by *it*; that merely by *it* they could neither keep themselves nor the Church right for a single week. You might preach to them what you please, they could not distinguish truth from error. Poor people, it is no wonder they are so fond of their formula! Therefore, they that exercise authority upon them and tell them what they are to believe and what they are to do, are called benefactors.

These are the reverend and right reverend authors, upon whom they *can* and *do* place a more entire and implicit confidence than upon the holy apostles and prophets; those plain, honest, unassuming men, who would never venture to say or do anything in the name of the Lord without an express revelation from Heaven, and therefore were never distinguished by the venerable titles of Rabbi or Reverend, but just simple Paul, John, Thomas. etc. *These* were but servants. They did not assume to legislate, and, therefore, neither

assumed nor received any honorary titles among men, but merely such as were descriptive of their office.

And how, we beseech you, shall this gross and prevalent corruption be purged out of the visible professing Church but by a radical reform, but by returning to the original simplicity, the primitive purity of the Christian institution, and, of course, taking up things just as we find them upon the sacred page. And who is there that knows anything of the present state of the Church who does not perceive that it is greatly overrun with the aforesaid evils? Or who that reads his Bible, and receives the impressions it must necessarily produce upon the receptive mind by the statements it exhibits, does not perceive that such a state of things is as distinct from the genuine Christianity as oil is from water?

*Departure from Bible, Cause of Schism.* On the other hand, is it not equally as evident that not one of all the erroneous tenets and corrupt practices which have so defamed and corrupted the public profession and practice of Christianity, could ever have appeared in the world had men kept close by the express letter of the Divine law, had they thus held fast that form of sound words contained in the holy Scriptures, and considered in their duty so to do, unless they blame those errors and corruptions upon the very form and expression of the Scriptures, and say that, taken in their letter and connection, they immediately, and at first sight, as it were exhibit the picture they have drawn. Should any be so bold as to assert this, let them produce their performance, the original is at hand; and let them show us line for line, expression for expression, precept and precedent for practice, without the torture of criticism, inference, or conjecture, and then we shall honestly blame the whole upon the Bible, and thank those that will give us an expurgated edition of it, call it constitution, or formula, or what you please, that will not be liable to lead the simple, unlettered world into those gross mistakes, those contentions, schisms, excommunications, and persecutions which have proved so detrimental and scandalous to our holy religion.

*Not Absolute Uniformity.* Should it be further objected, that even this strict literal uniformity would neither infer nor secure unity of sentiment; it is granted that, in a certain degree, it would not; nor, indeed, is here anything either in Scripture of the nature of things that should induce us to expect an entire unity of sentiment in the present imperfect state. The Church may, and we believe will, come to such a Scriptural unity of faith and practice, that there will be no schism in the body, no self-preferring sect of professed and acknowledged Christians rejecting and excluding their brethren. *This* cannot be, however, till the offensive and excluding causes be removed; and every one knows what *these* are. But that all the members should have the same identical views of all Divinely revealed truths, or that there should be no difference of opinion among them, appears to us morally impossible, all things considered. Nor can we conceive what desirable purpose such a unity of

sentiment would serve, except to render useless some of those gracious self-denying and compassionate precepts of mutual sympathy and forbearance which the word of God enjoins upon his people.

Such, then is the imperfection of our present state. Would to God it might prove, as it ought, a just and humbling counterbalance to our pride! Then, indeed, we would judge one another no more about such matters. We would rather be conscientiously cautious to give no offense; to put no stumbling-block or occasion to fall in our brother's way. We would then no longer exalt our own opinions and inferences to an equality with express revelation, by condemning and rejecting our brother for differing with us in those things.

*Plan Better Than Past Programs.* But although it be granted that the uniformity we plead for would not secure unity of sentiment, yet we should suppose that it would be as efficacious for that purpose as any human expedient or substitute whatsoever. And here we would ask: Have all or any of those human compilations been able to prevent divisions, to heal breaches, or to produce and maintain unity of sentiment even among those who have most firmly and solemnly embraced them? We appeal for this to the history of all the Churches, and to the present divided state of the Church at large. What good, then, have those devisive expedients accomplished, either to the parties that have adopted them, or to the Church universal, which might not have been as well secured by holding fast in professions and practice that form of sound words contained in the Divine standard, without, at the same time, being liable to any of those dangerous and destructive consequences which have necessarily ensued upon the present mode?

Or, will any venture to say that the Scriptures, thus kept in their proper place, would not have been amply sufficient, under the promised influence of the Divine Spirit, to have produced all that unity of sentiment which is necessary to a life of faith and holiness; and also to have preserved the faith and worship of the Church as pure from mixture and error as the Lord intended, or as the present imperfect state of his people can possibly admit? We should tremble to think that any Christian should say that they would not. And if to use them thus would be sufficient for those purposes, why resort to other expedients; to expedients which, from the beginning to this day, have proved utterly insufficient; nay, to expedients which have always produced the very contrary effects, as experience testifies.

Let none here imagine that we set any certain limits to the Divine intention, or to the greatness of his power when we thus speak, as if a certain degree of purity from mixture and error were not designed for the Church in this world, or attainable by his people upon earth except in so far as respects the attainment of an angelic or unerring perfection, much less that we mean to suggest that a very moderate degree of unity and purity should content us. We only take it for granted that such a state of perfection is

neither intended nor attainable in this world, as will free the Church from all those weaknesses, mistakes and mismanagements from which she will be completely exempted in heaven, however sound and upright she may now be in her profession, intention, and practice.

Neither let any imagine that we here or elsewhere suppose or intend to assert that human standards are intentionally set up in competition with the Bible, much less in opposition to it. We fairly understand and consider them as human expedients, or as certain doctrinal declarations of the sense in which the compilers understood the Scriptures, designed and embraced for the purpose of promoting and securing that desirable unity and purity which the Bible alone, without those helps, would be insufficient to maintain and secure. If this be not the sense of those that receive and hold them, for the aforesaid purpose, we should be glad to know what it is. It is, however, in this very sense that we take them up when we complain of them, as not only unsuccessful, but also as unhappy expedients, producing the very contrary effects.

And even suppose it were doubtful whether or not those helps have produced divisions, one thing, at least, is certain, they have not been able to prevent them; and now, that divisions do exist, it is as certain that they have no fitness nor tendency to heal them, but the very contrary, as fact and experience clearly demonstrate. What shall we do, then, to heal our divisions? We must certainly take some other way than the present practice, if they ever be healed; for it expressly says, they must and shall be perpetuated forever. Let all the enemies of Christianity say Amen; but let all Christians continually say: Forbid it, O Lord. May the good Lord subdue the corruptions and heal the divisions of his people. Amen and amen.

*Arguments Against Creeds.* After all that has been said, some of our timid brethren may, possibly, still object, and say: we fear that without the intervention of some definite creed or formula, you will justly incur the censure of latitudinarianism: for how otherwise detect and exclude Arians, Socinians, etc? To such we would reply, that if to profess, inculcate, and practice neither more nor less, neither anything else nor otherwise than the Divine word expressly declares respecting the entire subject of faith and duty, and simply to rest in *that*, as the expression of our faith and rule of our practice, will not amount to the profession and practical exhibition of Arianism, Socinianism, etc., but merely to one and the self-same thing, whatever it may be called, then is the *ground* that we have taken, the *principle* that we advocate, in nowise chargeable with latitudinarianism.

Should it be still further objected that all these sects, and many more, profess to receive the Bible, to believe it to be the word of God, and, therefore, will readily profess to believe and practice whatever is revealed and enjoined therein, and yet each will under-

stand in his own way, and of course practice accordingly; nevertheless, according to the plan proposed, you receive them all. We would ask, then, do all these profess and practice neither more nor less than what we read in the Bible—than what is expressly revealed and enjoined therein? If so, they all profess and practice the same thing, for the Bible exhibits but one and the self-same thing to all. Or, is it their own inferences and opinions that they, in reality, profess and practice? If so, then upon the ground that we have taken they stand rejected, as condemned of themselves, for thus professing one thing when in fact and reality they manifestly practice another.

But perhaps you will say, that although a uniformity in profession, and it may be in practice too, might thus be produced, yet still it would amount to no more than a mere uniformity in words, and in the external formalities of practice, while the persons thus professing and practicing might each entertain his own sentiments, how different soever these might be. Our reply is, if so, they could hurt nobody but themselves. Besides, if persons thus united professed and practiced all the same things, pray who could tell that they entertained different sentiments, or even in justice suppose it, unless they gave some evident intimation of it? which, if they did, would justly expose them to censure or to rejection, if they repented not; seeing the offense, in this case, must amount to nothing less than an express violation of the expressly revealed will of God—to a manifest transgression of the express letter of the law; for we have declared, that except in such a case, no man, in our judgment, has a right to judge, that is, to condemn or reject his professing brother. Here, we presume, there is no greater latitude assumed or allowed on either side than the law expressly determines.

But we would humbly ask, if a professed agreement in the terms of any standard be not liable to the very same objection? If, for instance, Arians, Socinians, Arminians, Calvinists, Antinomians, etc., might not all subscribe the Westminster Confession, the Athanasian Creed, or the doctrinal articles of the Church of England. If this be denied, we appeal to historical facts; and, in the meantime, venture to assert, that such things are and have been done.

Or, will any say, that a person might not with equal ease, honesty, and consistency, be an Arian or a Socinian in his heart while subscribing the Westminster Confession or the Athanasian Creed, as while making his unqualified profession to believe everything that the Scriptures declare concerning Christ? to put all that confidence in him, and to ascribe all that glory, honor, thanksgiving, and praise to him, professed and ascribed to him in the Divine word? If you say not, it follows, of undeniable consequence, that the wisdom of men, in those compilations, has effected what the Divine Wisdom either could not, would not, or did not do, in that all-perfect and glorious revelation of his will, contained in the Holy Scriptures. Happy emendation! Blessed expedient! Happy, indeed, for the Church that Athanasius arose in the fourth century

to perfect what the holy apostles and prophets had left in such a rude and unfinished state. But if, after all, the Divine Wisdom did not think proper to do anything more, or anything else than is already done in the sacred oracles, to settle and determine those important points, who can say that he determined such a thing should be done afterward? Or has he anywhere given us any intimation of such an intention?

*Limitation of Unity.* Let it here be carefully observed that the question before us is about human standards designed to be subscribed, or otherwise solemnly acknowledged, for the preservation of ecclesiastical unity and purity, and therefore, of course, by no means applies to the many excellent performances, for the Scriptural elucidation and defense of Divinely revealed truths and other instructive purposes. These, we hope, according to their respective merit, we as highly esteem, and as thankfully receive, as our brethren. But further, with respect to unity of sentiment, even suppose it ever so desirable, it appears highly questionable whether such a thing can at all be secured, by any expedient whatsoever, especially if we consider that it necessarily presupposes in so far a unity or sameness of understanding. Or, will any say, that from the youth of seventeen to the man of fourscore—from the illiterate peasant, up to the learned prelate—all the legitimate members of the Church entertain the same sentiments under their respective formulas? If not, it is still but a mere verbal agreement, a mere show of unity. They say an amen to the same forms of speech, or of sound words, as they are called, without having, at the same time, the same views of the subject; or, it may be, without any determinate views of it at all. And, what is still worse, this profession is palmed upon the world, as well as upon the too credulous professors themselves, for unity of sentiment, for soundness in the faith; when in a thousand instances, they have, properly speaking, no faith at all; that is to say, if faith necessarily presupposes a true and satisfactory conviction of the Scriptural evidence and certainty of the truth of the propositions we profess to believe.

A cheap and easy orthodoxy this, to which we may attain by committing to memory a catechism, or professing our approbation of a formula, made ready to our hand, which we may or may not have once read over; or even if we have, yet may not have been able to read it so correctly and intelligently as to clearly understand one single paragraph from beginning to end, much less to compare it with, to search and try it by the holy Scriptures, to see if these things be so. A cheap and easy orthodoxy this, indeed, to which a person may thus attain, without so much as turning over a single leaf of this Bible, whereas Christ knew no other way of leading us to the knowledge of himself, at least has prescribed no other, but by searching the Scriptures, with reliance upon his Holy Spirit.

A person may, however, by this short and easy method, become as orthodox as the apostle Paul (if such superficial professions,

such mere hearsay verbal repetitions can be called orthodoxy) without ever once consulting the Bible, or so much as putting up a single petition for the Holy Spirit to guide him into all truth, to open his understanding to know the Scriptures; for, his form of sound words truly believed, if it happen to be right, must, without more ado, infallibly secure his orthodoxy. Thrice happy expedient! But is there no latitudinarianism in all this? Is not this taking a latitude, in devising ways and means for accomplishing Divine and saving purposes, which the Divine law has nowhere prescribed, for which the Scriptures nowhere afford us either precept or precedent? Unless it can be shown that making human standards to determine the doctrine, worship, discipline, and government of the Church for the purpose of preserving her unity and purity, and requiring an approbation of them as a term of communion is a Scripture institution.

Far be it from us, in the meantime, to allege that the Church should not make every Scriptural exertion in her power to preserve her unity and purity; to teach and train up her members in the knowledge of all divinely revealed truth; or to say that the evils above complained of attach to all that are in the habit of using the aforesaid helps; or that this wretched state of things, however, general, necessarily proceeds from the legitimate use of such; but rather and entirely from the abuse of them, which is the very and thing that we are all along opposing when we allude to those subordinate standards. (An appellation this, by the by, which appears to us highly paradoxical, if not utterly inconsistent, and full of confusion.)

*Proper Use of Creeds and Catechisms.* But, however this may be, we are by no means to be understood as at all wishing to deprive our fellow-Christians of any necessary and possible assistance to understand the Scriptures, or to come to a distinct and particular knowledge of every truth they contain, for which purpose the Westminster Confession and Catechism may, with many other excellent performances, prove eminently useful. But, having served ourselves of these, let our profiting appear to all, by our manifest acquaintance with the Bible; by making our profession of faith and obedience; by declaring its Divine dictates, in which we acquiesce, as the subject-matter and rule of both; in our ability to take the Scripture in its connection upon these subjects, so as to understand one part of it by the assistance of another; and in manifesting our self-knowledge, our knowledge of the way of salvation and of the mystery of the Christian life, in the express light of Divine revelation, by a direct and immediate reference to, and correct repetition of what it declares upon those subjects.

We take it for granted that no man either knows God, or himself, or the way of salvation, but in so far as he has heard and understood his voice upon those subjects, as addressed to him in the Scriptures, and that, therefore, whatever he has heard and learned of a saving nature, is contained in the express terms of the Bible.



If so, in the express terms, in and by which “he hath heard and learned of the Father;” let him declare it. This by no means forbids him to use helps, but, we humbly presume, will effectually prevent him from resting either in them or upon them, which is the evil so justly complained of; from taking up with the directory instead of the object to which it directs. Thus will the whole subject of his faith and duty, in so far as he has attained, be expressly declared in a “Thus saith the Lord.” and is it not worthy of remark, that of whatever use other books may be, to direct and lead us to the Bible, or to prepare and assist us to understand it, yet the Bible never directs us to any book but itself.

*Superiority of the Bible.* When we come forward, we, as Christians, to be received by the Church, which, properly speaking, has but one book, “For to it were committed the oracles of God,” let us hear of none else. Is it not upon the credible profession of our faith in, and obedience to its Divine contents, that the Church is bound to receive applicants for admission? And does not a profession of our faith and obedience necessarily presuppose a knowledge of the dictates we profess to believe and obey? Surely then, we can declare them, and as surely, if our faith and obedience be Divine, as to the subject-matter, rule, and reason of them, it must be a “Thus saith the Lord”: if otherwise, they are merely human, being taught by the precepts of men.

In the case then before us, that is, examination for Church-membership, let the question no longer be, What does any human system say of the primitive or present state of man? of the person, offices, and relations of Christ, etc., etc.? or of this, that, or the other duty? but, What says the Bible? Were this mode of procedure adopted, how much better acquainted with their Bibles would Christians be? What an important alteration would it also make in the education of youth? Would it not lay all candidates for admission into the Church under the happy necessity of becoming particularly acquainted with the holy Scriptures? whereas, according to the present practice, thousands know little about them.

*A Further Objection.* One thing still remains that may appear matter of difficulty or objection to some, namely, that such a close adherence to the express letter of the Divine word, as we seem to propose, for the restoration and maintenance of Christian unity, would not only interfere with the free communication of our sentiments one to another upon religious subjects, but must, of course, also necessarily interfere with the public preaching and expounding of the Scriptures for the edification of the Church. Such as feel disposed to make this objection, should justly consider that one of a similar nature, and quite as plausible, might be made to the adoption of human standards, especially when made as some of them confessedly are, “the standard for all matters of doctrine, worship, discipline, and government.”

In such a case it might, with as much justice, at least, be ob-

jected to the adopters: You have now no more use for the Bible; you have got another book, which you have adopted as a standard for all religious purposes; you have no further use for explaining the Scriptures, either as to matter of faith or duty, for this you have confessedly done already in your standard, wherein you have determined all matters of this nature. You also profess to hold fast the form of sound words, which you have thus adopted, and therefore you must never open your mouth upon any subject in any other terms than those of your standard. In the meantime, would any of the parties which has thus adopted its respective standard, consider any of these charges just? If not, let them do as they would be done by. We must confess, however, that for our part, we cannot see how, with any shadow of consistency, some of them could clear themselves, especially of the first; that is to say, if words have any determinate meaning; for certainly it would appear almost, if not altogether incontrovertible, that a book adopted by any party as its standard for all matters of doctrine, worship, discipline, and government, must be considered as the Bible of that party.

And after all that can be said in favor of such a performance, be it called Bible, standard, or what it may, it is neither anything more nor better than the judgment or opinion of the party composing or adopting it, and, therefore, wants the sanction of a Divine authority, except in the opinion of the party which has thus adopted it. But can the opinion of any party, be it ever so respectable, give the stamp of a Divine authority to its judgments? If not, then every human standard is deficient in this leading, all-important, and indispensable property of a rule or standard for the doctrine, worship, discipline, and government of the Church of God. But, without insisting further upon the intrinsic and irremediable deficiency of human standards for the above purpose (which is undeniably evident if it be granted that a Divine authority is indispensably necessary to constitute a standard or rule for Divine things, such as is the constitution and managements, the faith, and worship of the Christian Church), we would humbly ask, Would any of the parties consider as just the foregoing objections, however conclusive and well founded all or any of them may appear? We believe they would not.

And may we not with equal consistency hold fast the expressly revealed will of God, in the very terms in which it is expressed in his holy word, as the very expression of our faith and express rule of our duty, and yet take the same liberty that they do, notwithstanding their professed and steadfast adherence to their respective standards? We find they do not cease to expound, because they have already expounded, as before alleged, nor yet do they always confine themselves to the express terms of their respective standards, yet they acknowledge them to be their standards and profess to hold them fast. Yea, moreover, some of them profess, and, if we may conclude from facts, we believe each of them is

disposed to defend by occasional vindications (or testimonies, as some call them) the sentiments they have adopted and engrossed in their standards, without at the same time requiring an approbation of those occasional performances as a term of communion. And what should hinder us, or any, adopting the Divine standard, as aforesaid, with equal consistency to do the same for the vindication of the Divine truths expressly revealed and enjoined therein?

To say that we cannot believe and profess the truth, understand one another, inculcate and vindicate the faith and law of Christ, or do the duties incumbent upon Christians or a Christian Church without a human standard, is not only saying that such a standard is quite essential to the very being of Christianity, and, of course, must have existed before a Church was or could be formed, but it is also saying, that without such a standard, the Bible would be quite inadequate as a rule of faith and duty, or, rather, of no use at all, except to furnish materials for such a work; whereas the Church of Ephesus, long before we have any account of the existence of such a standard, is not only mentioned, with many others, as in a state of existence, and of high attainments too, but is also commended for her vigilance and fidelity in detecting and rejecting false apostles. "Thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars." But should any pretend to say that although such performances be not essential to the very being of the Church, yet are they highly conducive to its wellbeing and perfection. For the confutation of such an assertion, we would again appeal to Church history and existing facts and leave the judicious and intelligent Christian to determine.

*Further Defense Against Latitudinarianism.* If after all that has been said, any should still pretend to affirm that the plan we profess to adopt and recommend is truly latitudinarian, in the worst and fullest sense of the term, inasmuch as it goes to make void all human efforts to maintain the unity and purity of the Church, by substituting a vague and indefinite approbation of the Scriptures as an alternative for creeds, confessions, and testimonies, and thereby opens a wide door for the reception of all sorts of characters and opinions into the Church. Were we not convinced by experience, that notwithstanding all that has been said, such objections would likely be made, or that some weak persons might possibly consider them as good as demonstration, especially when proceeding from highly influential characters (and there have not been wanting such in all ages to oppose, under various plausible pretenses, the unity and peace of the Church), were it not for these considerations, we should content ourselves with what we have already advanced upon the whole of the subject, as being well assured *that* duly attended to, there would not be the least room for such an objection; but to prevent if possible such un-

founded conclusions, or if this can not be done, to caution and assist the too credulous and unwary professor, that he may not be carried away all at once with the high-toned confidence of bold assertion, we would refer him to the overture for union in truth contained in the foregoing address.

Union in truth, among all the manifest subjects of grace and truth, is what we advocate. We carry our views of union no further than *this*, nor do we presume to recommend it upon any other principle than truth alone. Now, surely, truth is something certain and definite; if not, who will take upon him to define and determine it? This we suppose God has sufficiently done already in his holy word. That men therefore truly receive and make the proper use of the Divine word for walking together in truth and peace, in holiness and charity, is, no doubt, the ardent desire of all the genuine subjects of our holy religion. This, we see, however, they have not done, to the awful detriment and manifest subversion of what we might almost call the primary intention of Christianity.

We dare not, therefore, follow their example, nor adopt their ruinous expedients. But does it therefore follow that Christians may not, or cannot take proper steps to ascertain that desirable and preceptive unity which the Divine word requires and enjoins? Surely no; at least we have supposed no such thing; but, on the contrary, have overtured to our brethern what appears to us undeniably just and Scripturally evident, and which, we humbly think, if adopted and acted upon, would have the desired effect; adopted and acted upon, not indeed as a standard for the doctrine, worship, discipline, and government of the Church, for it pretends not to determine these matters, but rather supposes the existence of a fixed and certain standard of Divine original, in which everything that the wisdom of God saw meet to reveal and determine, for *these* and all other purposes, is expressly defined and determined; between the Christian and which, no medium of human determination ought to be interposed. In all this there is surely nothing like the denial of any lawful effort to promote and maintain the Church's unity, though there be a refusal of the unwarrantable interposition of an unauthorized and assuming power.

*Reasons for Writing the Appendix.* Let none imagine that we are here determining upon the merits of the overture to which, in the case before us, we find it necessary to appeal in our own defense against the injustice of the supposed charge above specified. To the judgment of our brethren have we referred that matter, and with them we leave it. All we intend, therefore, is to avail ourselves so far of what we have done, as to show that we have no intention whatsoever of substituting a vague indefinite approbation of the Scriptures as an alternative for creeds, confessions, and testimonies, for the purpose of restoring the Church to her original constitutional unity and purity. In avoiding Scylla we would cautiously guard against being wrecked upon Charybdis. Ex-

tremes, we are told, are dangerous. We therefore suppose a middle way, a safe way, so plainly marked out by unerring wisdom, that if duly attended to under the Divine direction, the wayfaring men, though fools, need not err therein, and of such is the kingdom of God: "For he hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the things that are wise."

We therefore conclude it must be a plain way, a way most graciously and most judiciously adapted to the capacity of the subjects, and consequently not the way of subscribing or otherwise approving human standards as a term of admission into his Church, as a test and defense of orthodoxy, which even the compilers themselves are not always agreed about, and which nineteen out of twenty of the Lord's people cannot thoroughly understand. It must be away very far remote from logical subtilities and metaphysical speculations, and as such we have taken it up, upon the plainest and most obvious principles of Divine revelations and common sense—the common sense, we mean, of Christians, exercised upon the plainest and most obvious truths and facts divinely recorded for their instruction.

Hence we have supposed, in the first place, the true discrimination of Christian character to consist in an intelligent profession of our faith in Christ and obedience to him in all things according to the Scriptures, the reality of which profession is manifested by the holy consistency of the tempers and conduct of the professors with the express dictates and approved examples of the Divine word. Hence we have humility, faith, piety, temperance, justice, charity, etc., professed and manifested, in the first instance, by the persons professing with self-application the convincing, humbling, encouraging, pious, temperate, just and charitable doctrines and precepts of the inspired volume, as exhibited and enforced in its holy and approved examples, and the sincerity of this profession evidently manifested by the consistency of the professor's temper and conduct with the entire subject of his profession, either by an irreprovable conformity, like good Zachariah and Elisabeth, which is of all things most desirable, or otherwise, in case of any visible failure, by an apparently sincere repentance and evident reformation.

Such professors, and such only, have we supposed to be, by common consent, truly worthy the Christian name. Ask from the one end of heaven to the other, the whole number of such intelligent and consistent professors as we intend and have described, and, we humbly presume, there will not be found one dissenting voice. They will all acknowledge, with one consent, that the true discrimination of Christian character consists in these things, and that the radical or manifest want of any of the aforesaid properties completely destroys the character.

*Adequacy of the Bible.* We have here only taken for granted what we suppose no rational professor will venture to deny; namely: that the Divine word contains an ample sufficiency upon every one

of the foregoing topics to stamp the above character, if so be that the impressions which its express declarations are obviously calculated to produce be truly received; for instance, suppose a person profess to believe, with application to himself, that whole description of human depravity and wretchedness which the Scriptures exhibit of fallen man, in the express declaration and dismal examples of human wickedness therein recorded, contrasted with the holy nature, the righteous requirements, and inflexible justice of an infinitely holy, just, and jealous God, would not the subject-matter of such a profession be amply sufficient to impress the believing mind with the most profound humility, self-abhorrence, and dreadful apprehension of the tremendous effects of sin?

Again, should the person profess to believe, in connection with this, all that the Scriptures declare of the sovereign love, mercy, and condescension of God toward guilty, depraved, rebellious man, as the same is manifested in Christ, and in all the gracious declarations, invitations, and promises that are made in and through him for the relief and encouragement of the guilty, etc., would not all this, taken together, be sufficient to impress the believing mind with the most lively confidence, gratitude, and love? Should this person, moreover, profess that delight and confidence in the Divine Redeemer—that voluntary submission to him—that worship and adoration of him which the Scriptures expressly declare to have been the habits and practice of his people, would not the subject-matter of this profession be amply sufficient to impress the believing mind with that dutiful disposition, with that gracious veneration and supreme reverence which the word of God requires? And should not all this taken together satisfy the Church, in so far, in point of profession? If not, there is no alternative but a new revelation; seeing that to deny this, is to assert that a distinct perception and sincere profession of whatever the word declares upon every point of faith and duty, is not only insufficient, as a doctrinal means, to produce a just and suitable impression in the mind of the believing subject, but is also insufficient to satisfy the Church as to a just and adequate profession; if otherwise, then it will necessarily follow, that not every sort of character, but that one sort only, is admissible upon the principle we have adopted; and that by the universal consent of all that we, at least, dare venture to call Christian, *this* is acknowledged to be, exclusively, the true Christian character.

Here, then, we have a fixed point, a certain description of character, which combines in every professing subject the Scriptural profession, the evident manifestation of humility, faith, piety, temperance, justice, and charity, instructed by, and evidently answering to the entire declaration of the word upon each of those topics, which, as so many properties, serve to constitute the character. Here, we say, we have a fixed, and at the same time sweeping distinction, which, as of old, manifestly divides the whole world, however otherwise distinguished, into but two classes only. “We

know," said the apostle, evidently speaking of such, "that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in wickedness."

*Ethical Definition of A Christian.* Should it be inquired concerning the persons included in this description of character, whether they be Arminians or Calvinists, or both promiscuously huddled together? It may be justly replied, that according to what we have proposed, they can be nominally neither, and of course not both, for we call no man master on earth, for one is our Master, even Christ, and all we are brethren, the Christians by profession; and as such abstract speculation and argumentative theory make no part either of our profession or practice. Such professors, then, as we intend and have described, are just what their profession and practice make them to be; and this we hope has been Scripturally, and we might add, satisfactorily defined, in so far, at least, as the limits of so brief a performance would admit. We also entertain the pleasing confidence that the plan of procedure which we have ventured to suggest, if duly attended to, if fully reduced to practice, would necessarily secure to the professing subject all the advantages of divinely revealed truth, without any liability to conceal, to diminish, or to misrepresent it, as it goes immediately to ascribe everything to God respecting his sovereignty, independence, power, wisdom, goodness, justice, truth, holiness, mercy, condescension, love, and grace, etc., which is ascribed to him in his word, as also to receive whatever it declares concerning the absolute dependence of the poor, guilty, depraved, polluted creature, upon the Divine will, power, and grace for every saving purpose; a just perception and correspondent profession of which, according to the Scriptures, is supposed to constitute that fundamental ingredient in Christian character: true evangelical humility. And so of the rest.

Having thus, we hope, Scripturally and evidently determined the character, with the proper mode of ascertaining it, to the satisfaction of all concerned, we next proceed to affirm, with the same Scriptural evidence, that among such, however situated, whether in the same or similar associations, there ought to be no schisms, no uncharitable divisions, but that they ought all mutually to receive and acknowledge each other as brethren. As to the truth of this assertion, they are all likewise agreed, without one dissenting voice. We next suggest that for this purpose they ought all to walk by the same rule, to mind and speak the same thing, etc., and that this rule is, and ought to be, the Divine standard. Here again we presume there can be no objection; no, not a single dissenting voice.

*The New Testament the Rule.* As to the rule itself, we have ventured to allege that the New Testament is the proper and immediate rule, directory, and formula for the New Testament Church, and for the particular duties of Christians, as the Old Testament fast for the Old Testament Church, and for

the particular duties of the subject under that dispensation; at the same time by no means excluding the Old as fundamental to, illustrative of, and inseparably connected with the New, and as being every way of equal authority, as well as of an entire sameness with it in every point of moral natural duty, though not immediately our rule, without the intervention and coincidence of the New, in which our Lord has taught his people, by the ministry of his holy apostles, all things whatsoever they should observe and do, till the end of the world. Thus we come to the one rule, taking the Old Testament as explained and perfected by the New, and the New as illustrated and enforced by the Old; assuming the latter as the proper and immediate directory for the Christian Church, as also for the positive and particular duties of Christians as to all things whatsoever they should observe and do. Further, that in the observance of his Divine rule, this authentic and infallible directory, all such may come to the desirable coincidence of holy unity and uniformity of profession and practice, we have overtured that they all speak, profess, and practice the very same things that are exhibited upon the sacred page of New Testament Scripture, as spoken and done by the Divine appointment and approbation; and that this be extended to every possible instance of uniformity, without addition or diminution, without introducing anything of private opinion or doubtful disputation into the public profession or practice of the Church.

Thus and thus have we overturned to all intents and purposes, as may be clearly seen by consulting the overture itself; in which, however, should anything appear not sufficiently explicit, we flatter ourselves it may be fully understood by taking into consideration what has been variously suggested upon this important subject throughout the whole of these premises; so that if any due degree of attention be paid, we should think it next to impossible that we could be so far misunderstood as to be charged with latitudinarianism in any usual sense of the word. Here we have proposed but one description of character as eligible, or, indeed, as at all admissible to the rights and privileges of Christianity. This description of character we have defined by certain and distinguishing properties, which not only serve to distinguish it from every other, but in which all the real subjects themselves are agreed, without one exception, all such being mutually and reciprocally acknowledged by each other as legitimate members of the Church of God. All these, moreover, agreeing in the indispensable obligation of their unity, and in the one rule by which it is instructed, and also in the preceptive necessity of an entire uniformity in their public profession and managements for promoting and preserving this unity, that there should be no schism in the body, but that all the members should have the same care one for another; yet in many instance, unhappily, and, we may truly say, involuntarily differing through mistake and mismanagement, which it is our humble desire and endeavor to detect and remove, by



obviating everything that causeth difference, being persuaded that as truth is one and indivisible wherever it exists, so all the genuine subjects of it, if disentangled from artificial impediments, must and will necessarily fall in together, be all on one side, united in one profession, acknowledge each other as brethren, and love as children of the same family.

For this purpose we have overturned a certain and determinate application of the rule, to which we presume there can be no reasonable objection, and which, if adopted and acted upon, must, we think, infallibly produce the desired effect; unless we should suppose that to say and do what is expressly said and done before our eyes upon the sacred page, would offend the believer, or that a strict uniformity, an entire Scriptural sameness in profession and practice would produce divisions and offenses among those who are already united in one spirit, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one hope of their calling, and in one God and Father of all who is above all, and through all and in them all, as is confessedly the case with all of this character throughout all the Churches. To induce to this we have also attempted to call their attention to the heinous nature and awful consequences of schism, and to that evil anti-scriptural principle from which it necessarily proceeds.

We have likewise endeavored to show, we humbly think with demonstrable evidence, that there is no alternative but either to adopt that Scriptural uniformity we have recommended, or else continue as we are, bewildered in schisms and overwhelmed with the accursed evils inseparable from such a state. It remains now with our brethren to determine upon the whole of these premises, to adopt or to reject, as they see cause; but, in the meantime, let none impeach us with the latitudinarian expedient of substituting a vague, indefinite approbation of the holy Scriptures as an alternative for the present practice of making the approbation of human standards a term of communion; as it is undeniably evident that nothing can be further from our intention.

*The Opposite of Latitudinarian.* Were we to judge of what we humbly propose and urge as indispensably necessary for the reformation and unity of the Church, we should rather apprehend that there was reason to fear a charge of a very different nature; namely: that we aimed at too much strictness, both as to the description of character which we say ought only to be admitted, and also as to the use and application of the rule. But should this be the case, we shall cheerfully bear with it, as being fully satisfied that not only the common sentiment of all apparently sincere, intelligent, and practical Christians is on our side, but that also the plainest and most ample testimonies of the inspired volume sufficiently attest the truth and propriety of what we plead for, as essential to the Scriptural unity and purity of the Christian Church, and this, we humbly presume, is what we should incessantly aim at. It would be strange, indeed, if in contending earnestly for the faith

once delivered to the saints, we should overlook those fruits of righteousness, that manifest humility, piety, temperance, justice, and charity, without which faith itself is dead, being alone. We trust we have not so learned Christ; if so be we have been taught by him as the truth is in Jesus, we must have learned a very different lesson indeed. While we would, therefore, insist upon an entire conformity to the Scriptures in profession, that we might all believe and speak the same things, and thus be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment, we would, with equal scrupulosity, insist upon and look for an entire conformity to them in practice, in all those whom we acknowledge as our brethren in Christ. "By their fruits ye shall know them." "Not every one saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Therefore whosoever heareth those sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man which built his house upon the sand. Woe unto you scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, for ye say and do not."

We therefore conclude that to advocate unity alone, however desirable in itself, without at the same time purging the Church of apparently unsanctified characters, even of all that cannot show their faith by their works, would be, at best, but a poor, superficial, skindeep reformation. It is from such characters, then, as the proposed reformation, if carried into effect, would entirely deprive of a name and a place in the Church, that we have the greatest reason to apprehend a determined and obstinate opposition. And alas! there are very many of this description, and in many places, of considerable influence. But neither should this discourage us, when we consider the expressly revealed will of God upon this point, Ezek. xlv: 6, 9, with Matt, xiii: 15, 17; 1 Cor. v:6, 13, with many other Scriptures. Nor, in the end, will the multitude of unsanctified professors which the proposed reformation would necessarily exclude, have any reason to rejoice in the unfaithfulness of those that either through ignorance, or for filthy lucre sake, indulged them with a name and place in the Church of God. These unfaithful stewards, these now mistaken friends, will one day be considered by such as their most cruel and treacherous enemies.

These, then, are our sentiments upon the entire subject of Church-reformation; call it latitudinarianism, or Puritanism or what you please; and *this* is the reformation for which we plead. Thus, upon the whole, have we briefly attempted to point out those evils, and to prevent those mistakes which we earnestly desire to see obviated for the general peace, welfare, and prosperity of the Church of God. Our dear brethren, giving credit to our sincere and well-meant intention, will charitably excuse the imperfections of our humble performance, and by the assistance of their better judgment correct those mistakes, and supply those deficiencies

which in a first attempt of this nature may have escaped our notice.

*Opposition to Controversy.* We are sorry, in the meantime, to have felt a necessity of approaching so near the borders of controversy, by briefly attempting to answer objections which we plainly foresaw would, through mistake or prejudice, be made against our proceedings; controversy making no part of our intended plan. But such objections and surmises having already reached our ears from different quarters, we thought it necessary to attend to them, that, by so doing, we might not only prevent mistakes, but also save our friends the trouble of entering into verbal disputes in order to remove them, and thus prevent, as much as possible, that most unhappy of all practices sanctioned by the plausible pretense of zeal for the truth—religious controversy among professors.

We would, therefore, humbly advise our friends to concur with us in our professed and sincere intention to avoid this evil practice. Let it suffice to put into the hands of such as desire in-practice. Let it suffice to put into the hands of such as desire information what we hereby publish for that purpose. If this, however, should not satisfy, let them give in their objections in writing; we shall thankfully receive, and seriously consider, with all due attention, whatever comes before us in this way; but verbal controversy we absolutely refuse. Let none imagine that by so saying, we mean to dissuade Christians from affording all the assistance they can to each other as humble inquirers after truth. To decline this friendly office would be to refuse the performance of an important duty. But certainly there is a manifest difference between speaking the truth in love for the edification of our brethren, and attacking each other with a spirit of controversial hostility, to confute and prove each other wrong. We believe it is rare to find one instance of this kind of arguing that does not terminate in bitterness. Let us, therefore, cautiously avoid it. Our Lord says, Matt. xvii:7. “Woe unto the world because of offenses.” Scott, in his incomparable work lately published in this country, called his Family Bible, observes in his notes upon this place, “that our Lord here intends all these evils within the Church which prejudice men’s minds against his religion, or any doctrines of it. The scandalous lives, horrible oppressions, cruelties, and iniquities of men called Christians; their divisions and bloody contentions; their idolatries and superstitions, are at this day the *great offenses* and *causes of stumbling* to Jews, Mohammedans, and pagans in all the four quarters of the globe, and they furnish in-fields of every description with their most dangerous weapons against the truth. The acrimonious controversies agitated among those who agree in the principal doctrines of the Gospel, and their mutual contempt and revilings of each other, together with the extravagant notions and wicked practices found among them, form

the grand prejudice in the minds of multitudes against evangelical religion, and harden the hearts of heretics, Pharisees, disguised infidels, and careless sinners against the truths of the Gospel. In these and numberless other ways, it may be said: 'Woe unto the world because of offenses,' for the devil, the sower of these tares, makes use of them in deceiving the nations of the earth and in murdering the souls of men. In the present state of human nature, it must needs be that such offenses should intervene, and God has wise and righteous reasons for permitting them; yet we should consider it as the greatest of evils to be accessory to the destruction of souls; and an awful woe is denounced against every one whose delusions or crimes thus stumble men and set them against the only method of salvation.'

*Final Illustration.* We conclude with an extract from the Boston Anthology, which, with too many of the same kind that might be adduced, furnish a mournful comment upon the text; we mean, upon the sorrowful subject of our woeful divisions and corruptions. The following reply to the Rev. Mr. Cram, missionary from Massachusetts to the Senecas, was made by the principal chiefs and warriors of the six nations in council assembled at Buffalo creek, State of New York, in the presence of the agent of the United States for Indian affairs, in the summer of 1805. "I am come, brethren," said the missionary, "to enlighten your minds and to instruct you how to worship the Great Spirit agreeably to his will, and to preach to you the Gospel of his Son Jesus Christ. There is but one way to serve God, and if you do not embrace the right way, you can not be happy hereafter." To which they reply: "Brother, we understand that your religion is written in a book. You say that there is but one way to worship and serve the Great Spirit. If there be but one religion, why do you white people differ so much about it? Why not all agree as you can all read the book? Brother, we do not understand these things. We are told your religion was given to your forefathers; we, also, have a religion which was given to our forefathers; it teaches us to be *thankful* for all the favors we receive; to *love* one another, and to be *united*. We never quarrel about religion. We are told you have been preaching to the white people in this place. Those people are our neighbors, we are acquainted with them. We will wait a little to see what effect your preaching has upon *them*. If we find it does them good, makes them *honest*, and *less* disposed to cheat Indians, we will then consider again of what you have said." Thus closed the conference. Alas, poor people! how do our divisions and corruptions stand in your way! What a pity that you find us not upon original ground, such as the apostles left the primitive Churches! Had we but exhibited to you their unity and charity; their humble, honest, and affectionate deportment toward each other, and toward all men, you would not have had those evil and shameful things to object to our holy religion, and to prejudice

your minds against it. But your conversion, it seems, awaits our reformation; awaits our return to primitive unity and love. To this may the God of mercy speedily restore us, both for your sakes and our own, that *his way* may be known upon earth, and his saving health among all nations. Let the people praise thee, O God; let all the people praise thee. Amen, and amen.

## II. COMMENT UPON THE APPENDIX TO THE DECLARATION AND ADDRESS

**T**HE *DECLARATION AND ADDRESS* proper closes with the signatures of Thomas Campbell and Thomas Acheson the former signing as secretary of the new Association and the latter as treasurer. General Acheson is now remembered almost entirely by reason of his signature to the Declaration and Address. He was, however, not only one of Mr. Campbell's warmest friends but also one of the most influential men in western Pennsylvania at that time. Robert Richardson says that no man in the county of Washington had more influence than Thomas Acheson. He had been Lieutenant Colonel Commandant of the 22d Regiment, Pennsylvania Militia and he was universally respected and honored by his contemporaries. Doubtless most people regarded his name as being far more significant than that of Thomas Campbell, but history has reversed the verdict of contemporary opinion.

The Appendix constitutes about three-fifths of the total material found in the Declaration and Address. Some very valuable passages are contained in it although the substance is in large measure identical with the plea of the Declaration proper. The purpose of the author in preparing this supplementary material is stated to be the further explanation of his project in order to avoid misconstruction of what he had in mind. He enumerates several features where he felt misunderstanding was possible. The first of these items has to do with the charge of proselyting and of building up a new party at the expense of congregations already in existence.

1. *No Intention of Proselyting.* To one whose disposition was so pre-eminently irenic as was that of Thomas Campbell, the charge of deliberately proselyting or working to tear down existing church organizations was peculiarly embarrassing. The first paragraph in the Appendix deals with this accusation and denies it in the strongest possible terms. "First, then," he says, "we beg to leave to assure our brethren that we have no intention to interfere, either directly or indirectly, with the peace and order of the settled Churches, by directing any ministerial assistance with which the Lord may please to favor us to make inroads upon such; or by endeavoring to erect Churches out of Churches, to distract and divide congregations." He goes on further to say that he "esteems all who preach a free unconditional salvation through the blood of Jesus to perishing sinners of every description, and who manifestly connect with this a life of holiness and pastoral diligence in the performance of all the duties of their sacred office, according to the Scriptures" as true ministers of the Church of Christ, "by whatever name they are called."

Alexander Campbell, in the only footnote which he has added to the Appendix, files an exception to the word "unconditional." He says, "there is neither conditional nor unconditional salvation so designated in Holy Scripture. As respects procurement, there is no condition. *It is of grace.* But, like *life* and *health*, there are conditions of enjoyment. We could not procure merit or purchase it at any price. But when justified by faith, and not by works, sanctified by the spirit, or separated from the world we are commanded to give 'all diligence to make our calling and election sure.' "

The interesting thing about the younger Campbell's comment is his assertion of theoretical belief in the theology of Luther while at the same time introducing the doctrine of works, as it were, by the back door. In the stress which the Campbells' Scott and Stone later came

to place upon baptism as a means of salvation, this secession from the Lutheran dogma is clearly apparent. The fact is that the Campbells, perhaps unconsciously, combined Protestant and Catholic theology to a degree not apparent in any other religious program. Along with this there is also more than a touch of Socinianism so that in many respects their plea is the most eclectic in Christendom.

2. *Attitude Toward Creeds and Confessions.* Another criticism which Thomas Campbell wished to guard against in the Appendix was the charge of attacking creeds and confessions of faith. At the time when the Declaration was written, creeds were regarded as absolutely essential to the very existence of the Church. The present day aversion to theological standards is a plant of comparatively late development. More than three decades after the appearance of the Declaration and Address, Alexander Campbell in his debate with Rice threw down the gauntlet and attacked all human creeds and confessions with the utmost disregard of consequences. No plank in his platform proved in the long run more appealing or unanswerable than his creedal anathema. It is questionable, however, whether Alexander himself would have taken this position in 1809. It required many years of experience and development to enable him to utter his final word upon the subject. Furthermore, it must always be remembered that Alexander was far less cautious and conciliatory in his temper than was his more mildly tempered father.

In any event, Thomas Campbell hastens in the earlier sections of the Appendix to disclaim any desire to overthrow creeds and dogmas as such. He says, "it is the *abuse* and not the *lawful use* of such compilations that we oppose." It is only when creeds oppose the unity of the church and when they "oppress the weak of God's heritage" that he objects to them. The whole tenor of

this portion of the Appendix, as is more or less true of the document throughout, is intended to assert the essential evangelicalism of its author. Socinianism, which was just at this time flowering into the unitarianism of Channing and his successors, was in bad repute with the orthodox Christian communities and Thomas Campbell did not wish to be grouped with the New England radicals. In fact, the major part of the Appendix is taken up with a denial of latitudinarianism as properly applying to the new movement. The Campbells were both thoroughly orthodox Presbyterians of the more liberal schools and were always averse to Unitarianism in any form. No theologians have stressed the doctrine of the divinity of Christ to a greater degree than was true of the early fathers of the Restoration movement. Even down to the present day, the most radical adherents of the Disciples of Christ resent any imputation of Unitarianism. The traditional antipathy to the Socinian theology still remains. It is rather striking in this connection to remember that there is, in reality, more Socinianism in the platform of the Campbells than there is Catholicism or Lutheranism.

3. *Breadth of Thomas Campbell's Position.* The irenic temper of the Declaration and Address is well maintained throughout the Appendix. Again and again, the author asserts that the program for unity which he suggests is only tentative and is to be subjected to the most rigid criticism. He says, "We have only proposed what appeared to us most likely to promote the desired event, humbly submitting the whole premises to their (our brethren) candid and impartial investigation, to be altered, corrected, and amended, as they see cause or to adopt any other plan that may appear more just and unexceptionable." There is nothing dogmatic or egotistical in such a proposition. Thomas Campbell desires Christian unity and is sure that if honest Christians of all parties will approach the subject in the right way, some means for securing union will be discovered. Whatever these means may be, the author of the Dec-



laration and Address is willing to accept them. He offers his own suggestion as a contribution to the problem. Beyond this, he does not claim to go.

While the above statement undoubtedly represents the general temper of the Declaration, it is only fair to refusing a place to them in heaven, "unless we should partial reading of the Appendix that the author had every confidence in his own platform. He says, for example, "If the first Christian churches walking in the fear of the Lord in holy unity and unanimity, enjoyed the comforts of the Holy Spirit, and were increased and edified, we have reason to believe that walking in their footsteps will everywhere and at all times insure the same blessed privileges. And it is in an exact conformity to their recorded and approved example, that we, through grace, would be desirous to promote the erection of churches." Thomas Campbell doubtless stressed the Restoration idea less than Alexander, but there is abundant evidence that it occupied a place of foremost importance in his thinking. The reason why he is willing to stake his case upon the unbiased decision of his brethren, is because he is supremely confident that such judgment will be in favor of his position. Any other decision was, indeed, to him an unthinkable proposition. For the Church to get back to the New Testament ideal meant union to him and he could not think of union in any other terms.

It is true that his idea of unity was exceedingly broad at all times. He observes that the Hebrew Christians abstained from certain meats, observed certain days and did various other things which were not demanded of the Gentile converts, all without destroying the unity of the church. For this reason, he stands up stoutly for freedom of private opinion and for the utmost catholicity in religious practice.

4. *The Sin of Church Arrogance.* The Appendix is very vigorous in its denunciation of church intolerance and arrogance. Thomas Campbell had felt the weight of persecution in his own person and therefore wrote

out of direct and immediate experience. To refuse fellowship to Christians on earth, he says, is tantamount to refusing a place to them in heaven, "unless we should suppose that those whom Christ by his word rejects here, he will nevertheless receive hereafter." One cannot help feeling that the author has the presbytery of Chartiers in mind when he writes the following vigorous impeachment of intolerance: "Is it anything or is it nothing for a person to stand rejected by the Church of God. 'What ye bind on earth shall be bound in heaven' is the awful sanction of the Church's judgment in justly rejecting any person. Take away this, and it has no sanction at all. But the Church rejecting, always pretends to have acted justly in so doing, and if so whereabouts does it confessedly leave the person rejected, if not in a state of damnation? That is to say, if it acknowledged itself to be a Church of Christ and to have acted justly."

The criticism contained in the above paragraph cuts perhaps deeper than Thomas Campbell imagined. Pushed to its logical conclusion, it would lead to a complete interchange of members between Roman Catholic, Greek orthodox, and all forms of Protestant communion. We question whether Mr. Campbell himself would have gone so far at this time. He extends the argument, however, in rather relentless fashion to its full logical conclusion as far as the local Protestantism of his own land is concerned. He is obviously thinking of western Pennsylvania and especially of the Presbytery of Chartiers when he writes: "If, after all, any particular church acting thus should refuse the foregoing conclusion, by saying: we meant no such thing concerning the person objected; we only judged him unworthy of a place among *us*, and therefore put him away, but there are other churches that may receive him; we would be almost tempted to ask such a church if those other churches be Churches of Christ, and if so, pray what does it account itself? Is it anything more or better than a Church of Christ?"

The conclusion drawn from the above argument is that excluding any Christian from church fellowship is unjustifiable for the reason that if another church receives such an one, it has no more authority for doing so than would have been true in the case of the former church. This being the situation, by receiving the one rejected the second church lays itself open to the criticism of the first one and thereby produces a schism between the churches. Mr. Campbell pursues this vein still further when he uses the following language: "That church, therefore, must surely act very schismatically, very unlike a Church of Christ which necessarily presupposes or produces schism in order to shield an oppressed fellow-Christian from the dreadful consequences of its unrighteous proceedings. And is this not confessedly the case with every church which rejects a person from its communion while it acknowledges him to be a fellow-Christian; and in order to excuse this piece of cruelty, says he may find refuge some place else, some other church may receive him? For, as we have already observed, if no schism did already exist one church receiving those whom another has rejected must certainly make one."

These passages in the Appendix constitute the chief basis for the assertion that Thomas Campbell favored the practice of open membership in opposition to the more restricted use of Alexander. As we have already observed, if taken by themselves and pursued to their full logical conclusion, they would undoubtedly involve the idea of a universal exchange of members on the part of all churches claiming in any sense to be Christian. It is hardly fair to Mr. Campbell, however, to detach these passages from his main argument. As the writer sees the situation, the author of the Declaration and Address had not fully worked out his own program when he wrote the above passages. Only a few pages further on, he affirms distinctly the necessity for a return to the New Testament standard and practice in order to solve the problem of disunion. He nowhere

infers that he expects union upon any other terms. To quote his own language on the next page, "By simply returning to the original standard of Christianity, the profession and practice of the primitive Church as expressly exhibited upon the sacred page of the New Testament scriptures, is the only possible way that we can perceive to get rid of those evils (sectarian schisms)." A little further on he refers to the New Testament as "a perfect model, a sufficient formula for the worship, discipline and government of the Christian Church." And still further he adds, "and how we beseech you shall this gross and prevalent corruption be purged out of the visible professing Church but by radical reform, but by returning to the original simplicity, the primitive purity of the Christian institution, and, of course, taking up things just as we found them upon the sacred page."

Are we to understand from the above passages that the Declaration and Address proposed Christian union with or without the restoration of the New Testament Church, or that it intended to suggest restoration as the only pathway to union? Whatever may have been the original meaning of the document, beyond any question, its author and its followers came finally to adhere to the second position. In all fairness, we think it rather questionable to assert that this decision was clearly in the mind of Thomas Campbell in 1809. There was some development in his religious thinking and practice after that date. This development led to clearer and more precise definition of his fundamental message, and yet it is at least highly questionable whether the Declaration itself is in any sense an open membership document. It can only be made so by quoting passages out of their context and by stressing one side alone of Thomas Campbell's teaching.

5. *How to Interpret the Scriptures.* The author of the Appendix gives due consideration to the charge later made by Mr. Rice in his debate with Alexander Campbell that a return to the New Testament means nothing with-

out a definite standard of interpretation of the text. In reply to this objection, Mr. Campbell asserts that there are no serious differences with regard to fundamentals of the Scripture on the part of right thinking and morally upright Christians of all groups or classes. It is the appeal made earlier to the arbitrament of the common mind. It is true that there is some hesitancy manifest in the language of the author at this point. Nevertheless, he clings to the standard of right reason and the enlightened consensus of opinion of right minded Christians. This is one point upon which the philosophy of the Campbells never varied.

Much latitude for freedom of opinion is afforded in Thomas Campbell's program. There is nothing, he thinks, in the Scripture or the nature of things "that should induce us to expect an entire unity of sentiment in the present imperfect state." The best we can hope for is that "the church may come to such a Scriptural unity of faith and practice, that there will be no schism in the body, no self-preferring sect of professed and acknowledged Christians rejecting and excluding their brother."

The unity above indicated, while not perfect, would be better, the author thinks, than anything which may be expected from other sources. The creedal method has been tried, he says, and has always produced schism instead of union. There is no hope therefore in proceeding further upon such a basis. We can certainly throw the creeds overboard without making our situation any worse. Mr. Campbell deals very gently with these documents, much more gently than was true of Alexander's later treatment. At this point too there was an evolution in the thinking of the Restoration fathers. As they grew more and more to emphasize the New Testament program, it naturally drew them farther away from the creedal pronouncements of later ages.

In answer to the further charge that Unitarians, or as they are called in the text, Arians and Socinians, could get into the church on the basis of receiving the

Bible as the word of God, the author replies that an Arian who can subscribe to the New Testament could also subscribe to any creed in Christendom. He does not think that Athanasius improved upon the apostles or their Master. If the apostolic creed will not keep out heretics, no other formulation will be effective.

It is a cheap and easy orthodoxy, Thomas Campbell says, to commit a catechism to memory, or to profess approbation of a formula which we have scarcely read, much less understood, in order to secure unanimity of view. This is the kind of unity which prevails in most creedal or ecclesiastical organizations. The members of such churches agree in their thinking for the simple reason that they have agreed not to think. Where people have no opinions at all, it may be said that their opinions coincide. As the author puts it "a person may by this short and easy method become as orthodox as the apostle Paul (if such superficial professions, such mere hearsay verbal repetitions can be called orthodoxy) without ever once consulting the Bible, or so much as putting up a single petition for the Holy Spirit to guide him into all truth, to open his understanding to know the Scriptures; for, his form of sound words truly believed, if it happened to be right, must, without more ado, infallibly secure his orthodoxy." It is of course needless to say that the Campbells always stood for independent thinking and unity based upon ignorance could only attract their scorn. Thinking people will not be bound by the creeds and will, to a certain extent, disagree in their views of the Scriptures. Nevertheless, Thomas Campbell did not doubt the divine character of the latter, interpreted by reason which is also the gift of God, would lead to unified thinking in all essential particulars.

6. *Superiority of the Bible as a Standard.* In answer to the criticism that a return "to the express letter of the Divine word" would have a legalistic and narrowing influence, the author urges that such an objection applies less to the Scriptures than to creedal formulations. Ministers and laymen alike, he says, will have greater free-

dom in interpreting the scriptures than they have in interpreting their own creeds, the latter narrowing the text instead of broadening it. Church standards were erected later than the Bible and the Bible standard functioned satisfactorily before they existed. As the Declaration puts it, "the church at Ephesus long before we have any account of the existence of such a standard, is not only mentioned, with many others as in a state of existence, and of high attainments too, but is also commended for vigilance and fidelity in detecting and rejecting false apostles."

The author then comes back to his fundamental thesis that truth must be one and that the word of God is the only infallible expression of truth. "Union in truth," he says, "among all the manifest subjects of grace and truth is what we advocate. We carry our views of union no farther than *this*, nor do we presume to recommend it upon any other principle than truth alone. Now, surely, truth is something certain and definite; if not, who will take upon him to define and determine it? This we suppose God has sufficiently done already in His Holy Word."

Thomas Campbell, like Alexander, was an Aristotelian in his thinking. He believed thoroughly in the doctrine of the golden mean and the philosophy of Meliorism. He was a "middle-of-the-roader" in the full sense of the term. To quote his own language, "extremes we are told are dangerous. We therefore suppose a middle way, a safe way, so plainly marked out by unerring wisdom, that if duly attended to under the Divine direction, the way-faring men, though fools, need not err therein, and of such is the kingdom of God." He continues further in his assertion of this *via media* by explaining the method through which all men may arrive at a knowledge of what the correct pathway is. He says: "It must be a way very far remote from logical subtleties and metaphysical speculations, and as such we have taken it up, upon the plainest and most obvious principles of divine revelation and common sense—the common sense, we

mean, of Christians, exercised upon the plainest and most obvious truths and facts divinely recorded for their instruction.”

In the above passage, the authority of the common reason, as the only safe interpreter of scripture, is clearly emphasized. No doubt both of the Campbells derived this doctrine of the universal reason from what was known as the Common Sense metaphysics of Reid and the Scottish school of philosophy in general. Reid was held in the highest repute at Edinburgh during the time when Alexander Campbell was a student in Scotland, and the philosophy which the young man imbibed must have been chiefly of the “Common Sense” variety. Apparently the rationalism of Leibnitz and the critical idealism of Kant and his later followers were entirely unknown to the author of the Declaration and Address. The Campbells, as Dr. W. E. Garrison has clearly shown, drew their psychology from Locke almost exclusively. It seems equally certain, however, that their philosophy was derived from the teaching of Reid and the school of which he was the most distinguished representative.

Thomas Campbell asserts, at the conclusion of the Appendix, his thorough confidence in the adequacy of the Bible as a standard of truth. More than the sacred text is not needed to convict sinners or to furnish them with the way of salvation. Men and women converted by simple obedience to the scriptural teaching and who manifest in their character and life the true Christian ideal of conduct, he thinks should be styled Christians by universal consent. Nothing more than this is needed to constitute membership in the body of the faithful and nothing more should be required. Whether such people are Arminians or Calvinists, he says, makes but little difference. The important thing is whether they are Christians. Moreover, they are Christians if they love Christ and obey him as far they know his will. All such followers of Christ should be acknowledged as members of the church and should be given its full and cordial fellowship. To quote his own words again,



“Among such, however situated, whether in the same or similar associations, there ought to be no schisms, no uncharitable divisions but they ought all mutually to receive and acknowledge each other as brethren.”

In his discussion of the relation between the Old and New Testament, the author of the Declaration and Address clearly shows the influence of the covenant theology of Coccejus, the great Dutch teacher and theologian. Alexander Campbell, in his Sermon on the Law delivered seven years later, elaborated the covenant idea in much greater detail. There can be little question but that the doctrine of progressive development along with the idea of the unscripturalness of the Sabbath and a certain distinct bias toward Christian union, all came to the Campbells largely through the influence of Coccejus. The fact is that both men derived their theology from the Leyden professor almost to the same degree that they drew their psychology from Locke and their metaphysics from Reid.

7. *Final Conclusions.* The Appendix concludes with an appeal to Christian charity which is especially significant in view of the partisan feelings which prevailed at the time. The author especially disclaims any desire to engage in controversy or to do anything which would further accentuate the bitterness already too prevalent in Christian circles. “Religious controversy among professors,” he says, is “the most unhappy of all practices sanctioned by the plausible pretense of zeal for the truth. We would, therefore, humbly advise our friends to concur with us in our professed and sincere intention to avoid this evil practice. Let it suffice to put into the hands of such as desire information what we hereby publish for that purpose. If this, however, should not satisfy, let them give in their objections in writing; we shall thankfully receive, and seriously consider, with all due attention, whatever comes before us in this way; but verbal controversy we absolutely refuse.”

The concluding sentence of the above quotation possesses no little touch of humor when one takes into

account the later history of Alexander Campbell. As one of the foremost, if not the foremost, religious debaters of modern times, it can hardly be said that the younger Campbell adhered to his father's maxim "absolutely to refuse verbal controversy." It is only fair, however, to say that Thomas Campbell himself never debated his views upon the public platform and that Alexander was led to adopt the controversial method largely under the stress of circumstances. At the time the Declaration and Address was written, he would probably have agreed with his father concerning the wisdom of avoiding public discussion.

In the final illustration with which the Appendix closes, Thomas Campbell strikes the highest ground. The test of Christianity is Christian character and service. The whole point to the story is found in its emphasis upon vital Christianity. In view of the tendency of the later followers of the Campbells to stress the formal element in religion, it is unfortunate that the concluding pages of the Declaration and Address have not been better known among them. The truth of the matter is that the Campbells' conception of Christianity, and this was especially true of the elder of the two men, was ethical through and through. If later controversies temporarily led to an apparent under-stressing of this fundamental feature in their plea, that fact does not invalidate the essential character of the plea itself. Thomas Campbell desires to restore the original church. The restoration he has in mind is far more a matter of life than of form. As he says in almost the final words of his immortal document, "What we need is to exhibit the unity and charity of the primitive churches as well as their humble, honest, and affectionate deportment toward each other and toward all men. The conversion of the world," he continues, "awaits our return to primitive unity and love." There is no finer ideal in religious literature than that which is embodied in the concluding words of Thomas Campbell's Christian union overture.







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